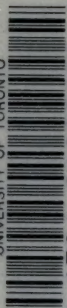
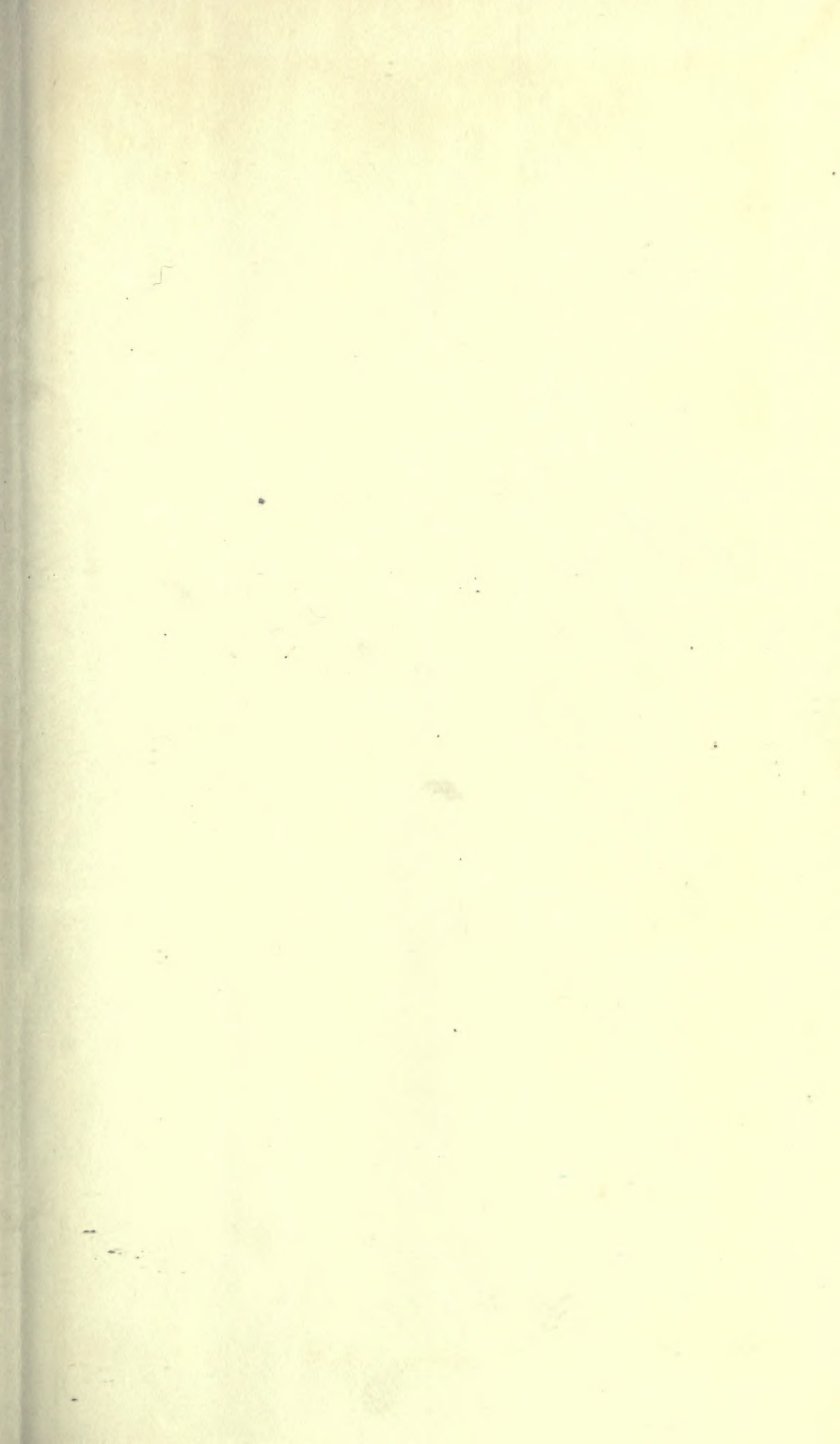


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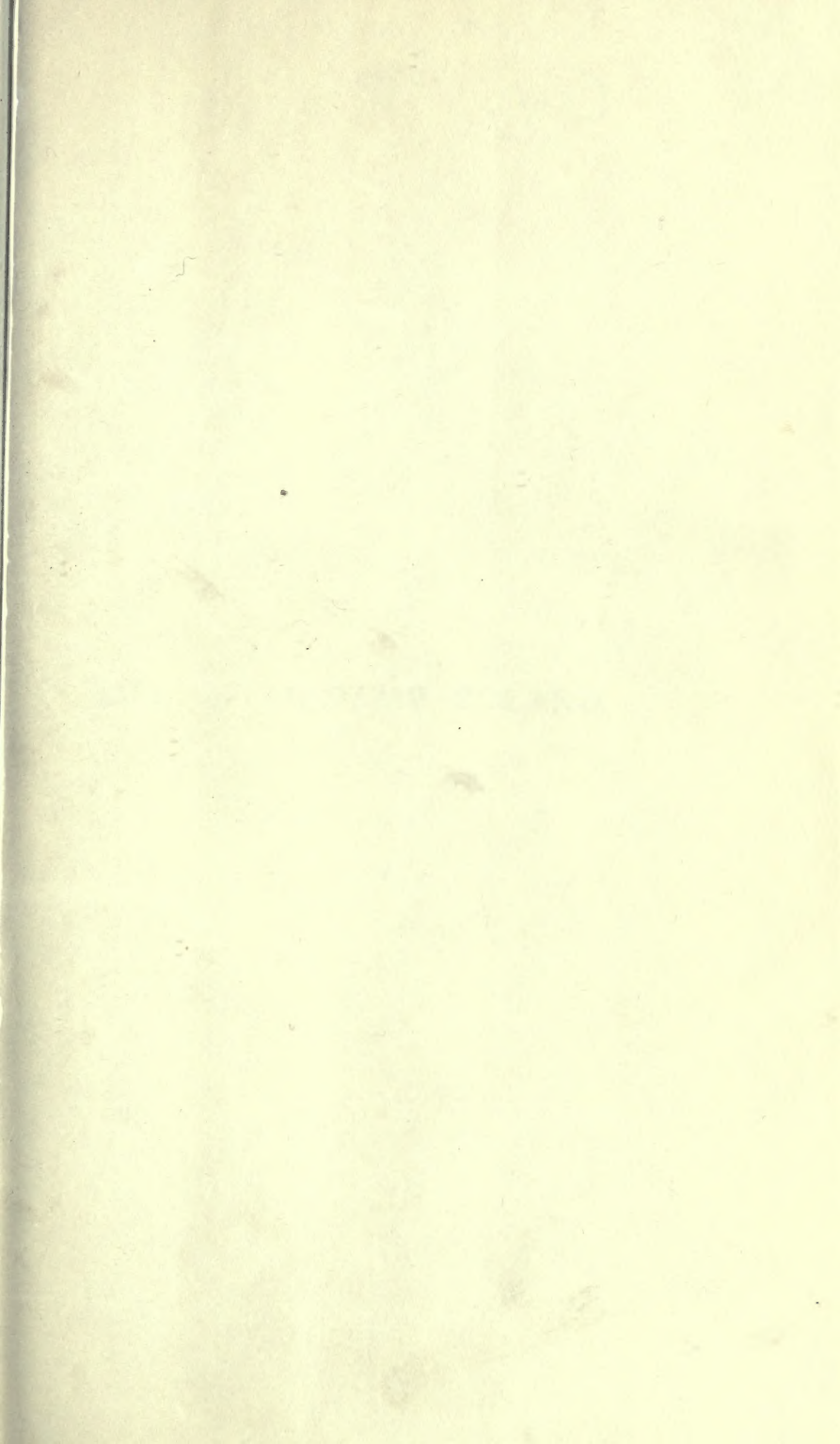






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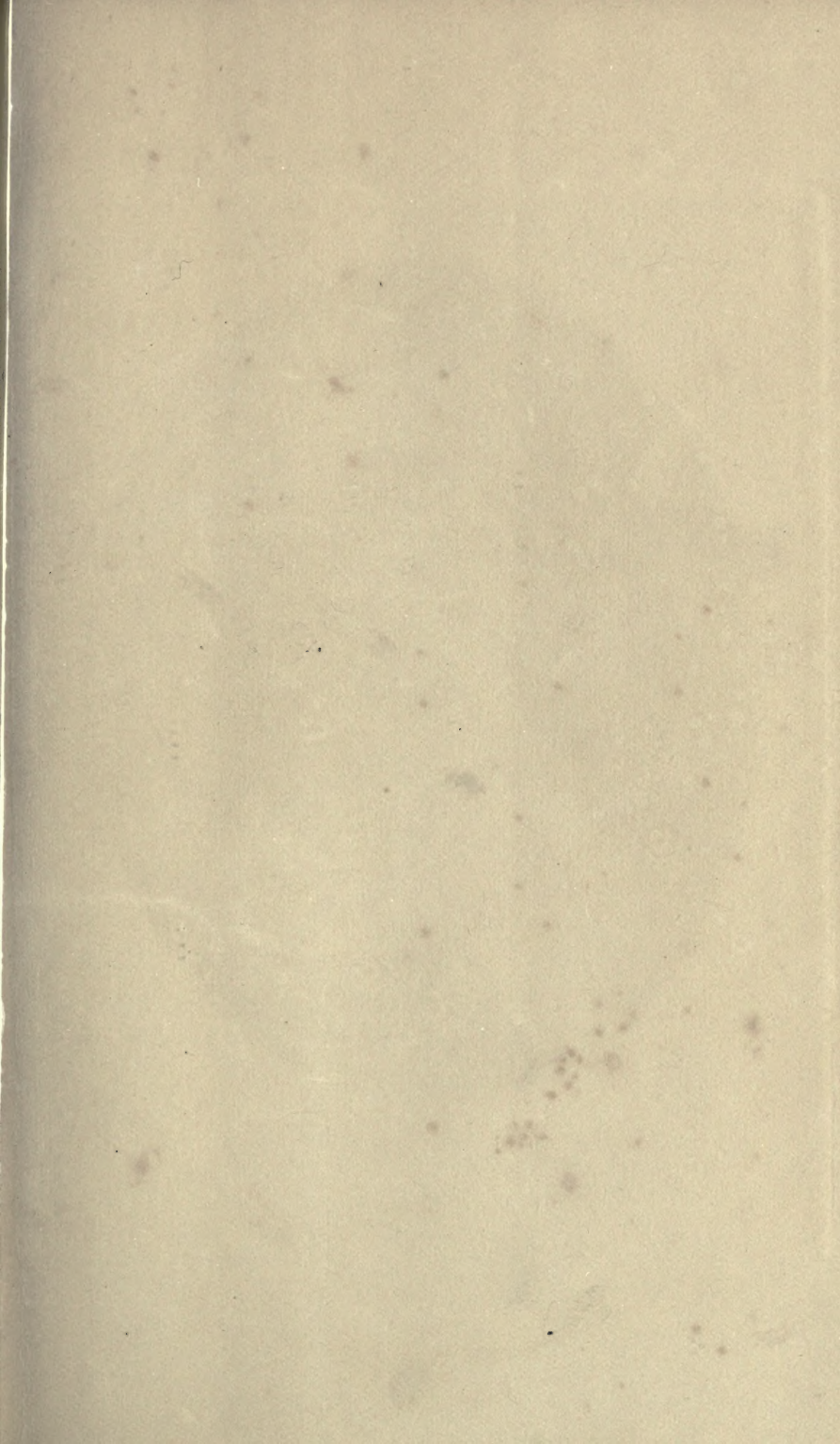
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LIFE OF MADAME ROLAND









*Madame Roland.*  
*From a painting by Hensius at Versailles.*

# LIFE OF MADAME ROLAND

By I. A. TAYLOR

*Author of "Queen Hortense and Her Friends," "Queen Christina of Sweden,"  
"Lady Jane Grey and Her Times," etc. etc.*

WITH 15 ILLUSTRATIONS, INCLUDING  
A PHOTOGRAVURE FRONTISPIECE

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## PREFATORY NOTE

MANY writers have concerned themselves, directly or indirectly, with Madame Roland, her place in history, and the influence she exercised during the brief period covered by what may be called her public life. The most prominent feminine figure of the French Revolution, the representative and embodiment of the spirit by which its purest and most disinterested adherents were animated, she has attracted an amount of attention only less than that accorded to its foremost leaders. Her Memoirs have been printed and reprinted by editors many and various, by friends who had loved her—with omissions they considered due to her memory—by later historians in their entirety. Her letters have been collected and published, and the information thus supplied has been supplemented by facts that have gradually come to light and made plain to the general public secrets jealously guarded by her comrades and associates.

In most cases it would seem hard that the veil should have been thus withdrawn; but had it been possible in this instance to consult the person chiefly concerned, it is not likely that she would have shrunk from these revelations. She had a hardy self-confidence which precluded the dread of exposure, and there is no

reason to doubt the sincerity of her reiterated assertion of a desire that the whole truth concerning her should be known. "I have made my reckoning and taken my part," she wrote from prison. "I will tell all—absolutely all." And when the friend to whom a large portion of her manuscripts was confided expressed doubts as to the expediency of so much openness, she refused to be convinced. "For what concerns myself personally," she wrote, "I hold absolutely to the truth. I have never felt the least temptation to win greater esteem than I am worthy of." Her faith in herself was great, and was largely justified; nor did she fear that the truth would do her memory wrong.

It is not probable that much that is material will be added to what is now known. To the labours of M. Claud Perroud, the latest editor of her *Memoirs* and letters, supplemented by copious notes and appendices, any future biographer must be largely indebted. His researches appear to have been practically exhaustive, and from the data he supplies, as well as from the testimony of contemporaries, it is possible to gain a clear view of the woman she was—generous, courageous, warm-hearted, arrogant, and self-occupied. Of that woman, her great gifts and powers, her faults and her weaknesses, and the charm she exercised over those brought into contact with her, I have here endeavoured to give a picture, adding only so much of the history of her times as may be necessary to throw her figure into relief and to define the place she filled with regard to it.

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*Sur Prison de St. Pélagie*



*Le fait que mon ami Pote sera bien aidé —  
 à l'avenir en trouvant de l'ouvrage, croyant les maîtres  
 du courage et de l'innocence particulièrement ;  
 mon amie en leur destinée. —*

MADAME ROLAND AT SAINTE-PÉLAGIE (see p. 284).



# Life of Madame Roland

## CHAPTER I

1754—1765

Birth of Marie Jeanne Phlipon—Various estimates of her—Her parentage, childhood, and education—She is placed at a convent.

ON March 17, 1754, began the short, strenuous, and tragic life of the woman known to the world as Madame Roland.

The period covered by what may be called her public life is brief. It is as the heroine of the Gironde, as the representative of a group containing the noblest, most disinterested, and most single-hearted patriots of the French Revolution, that she has won notoriety. The Girondists were the idealists of its opening phase, and amongst them Madame Roland stood foremost, sharing to the full their hopes, their illusions, their enthusiasms, their devotion, their bitter disappointments, and their doom. Men of all parties and of opposite tempers have united to praise her. To Sainte-Beuve she is the genius of her party, in her strength, her purity, her grace; its muse, brilliant and severe, invested with the sacredness of martyrdom. To Michelet she is the type of those makers of history who, perceiving in external things what as yet only exists within, seeing, create it. She had that faith in the possibilities, though unexplored, of human nature which is essential to its real

comprehension, and even more essential if a successful appeal is to be made to it. She had also the true spirit of self-sacrifice alone conferring upon the possessor a right to demand the like from others.

For her three years of semi-public life the thirty-six preceding ones were a preparation and a training, showing a gradual development and ripening of the singular gifts and powers bestowed upon her by nature. Their history is the history of a soul and a mind. Owing nothing to birth, nothing to environment, she rescues herself, by the sheer force of her individuality, of her will and her character, from her surroundings, obtains recognition, and triumphantly emerges from her native obscurity into the full light.

In blood, position, and circumstance there was nothing to render it likely that Marie Jeanne Phlipon would play a conspicuous part amongst the men and women of her generation. She was the daughter of parents belonging to the Parisian middle class. Her grandfather, Gacien Phlipon, had been a wine-merchant; her father, another Gacien, was a master-engraver, and, occupying a position half-way between the artist and the tradesman, employed many workmen and apprentices, and combined with his craft the traffic in precious stones to which his subsequent ruin was largely due. Her mother, married at twenty-six, brought little dowry save a charming face and a sweet and unblemished character to the husband selected for her, on whom, according to her daughter, she bestowed herself without any illusions as to her future prospects. "An honest man whose gifts ensured a livelihood was presented to her by her parents, and reason bade her accept him. In the absence of the happiness she could not anticipate she felt that she would cause the peace which takes its place to reign around her," and Marguerite Bimont became the wife of Pierre Gacien Phlipon.

Their second child was born in the street then bearing the name of the rue de la Lanterne, and afterwards called the rue de la Cité, and, baptized on the following day, received the names of Marie Jeanne. Of Marguerite Phlipon's seven children she was the sole survivor, "all the rest dying out at nurse or at birth, in consequence of divers accidents." Such is the cursory mention made by their sister of the little band who had passed away. Yet, if it was in a home shadowed by reiterated misfortune that Manon's first years were spent, no consciousness of any cloud is perceptible in Madame Roland's record of her childhood. Written in prison during the months intervening between her arrest and the guillotine, these memoirs—"jouant," once more to quote Sainte-Beuve, "d'eux-mêmes dans le cadre sanglant, funèbre, qui les entoure"—supply a graphic and charming description of the child she was, or that she believed herself to have been. Nor is there any reason to question her veracity. If her estimate of herself, her gifts and talents, was at all times high, it was not unjustified, and the woman whose unusual powers are attested by a crowd of independent witnesses may not have been mistaken in laying claim to a supernormal childhood.

In conformity with the custom of the time, the first two years of Manon's life were passed, not under her father's roof, but in the care of her foster-nurse—a worthy woman for whom she cherished a life-long affection. When she was reclaimed by her parents they had shifted their abode, and M. Phlipon had established himself upon the quai de l'Horloge, looking upon the Pont Neuf, one of the fashionable resorts of the Paris of that day. There he carried on his craft, the removal to new quarters bearing witness to the thriving condition of his business; and there he pursued, less fortunately, the commercial enterprises he had added to his original calling by trading in jewelry and gems.



Whatever Phlipon afterwards became, he bore the character, at this period, of a respectable and prosperous man of business. "One cannot say," wrote his daughter with impartial candour, "that he was high-minded; but he had much of what is called honour; he would, indeed, have charged more for an article than it was worth; he would, however, have killed himself rather than fail to pay for what he bought." It was to a dwelling of ease and comfort that Manon was brought when at two years old she exchanged the country home of her foster-mother for her father's house. A brown-faced, black-headed, healthy child, she was well calculated to introduce new life and interest into her mother's shadowed existence. Between the two the bonds of affection were quickly and closely knit, only to be severed, twenty years later, by Madame Phlipon's death. Notwithstanding the self-will and independence of the child, a word from her mother would suffice to reduce her to a condition of penitence, and looking back across thirty years, the culprit could still recall the impression produced upon her by a look of displeasure or the substitution of the term "*Mademoiselle*" for "*ma fille*" or "*Manon*," the name by which she habitually went.

With her father, on the other hand, her relations left much to be desired; nor was it until after a final trial of strength, ending in the defeat of the elder combatant, that M. Phlipon relinquished the attempt to govern, and permanent peace was established. "It is not out of place," says Madame Roland—and she is right—"to draw attention to the facts that decided him. . . . I was very obstinate; that is, I did not easily consent to that of which I did not see the reason, and when I was conscious only of the exercise of authority or imagined that I detected caprice, I would not yield." It was natural that this temper of mind should bring the wills of father and daughter into collision. Content for the



most part to leave the management of the child to her mother, M. Phlipon nevertheless expected that an order, when given, should be met by a blind obedience. Manon was in no wise disposed to render, and trouble followed. Punished by a despot, the "gentle little girl became a lion." She was six years old when a climax was reached. M. Phlipon's commands—a distasteful medicine was in question—having been categorically disobeyed, corporal punishment was twice inflicted in vain. Threatened a third time with the whip, the child, probably already hysterical, gathered her resolution together, ceased crying and, leaning against the wall, prepared to undergo whatever might ensue rather than yield. "They might have killed me on the spot and I should not have given a sigh." The revolt against authority unenforced by reason, characteristic as it was of the woman she was to become, met with entire success. Phlipon withdrew, worsted, from the contest and accepted his defeat. Thenceforth and for many years father and daughter remained on friendly and affectionate terms.

Both parents were proud of the child, and nothing was spared in her education. She was an apt pupil, and at four years old could read. Many teachers were employed to instruct her in the various branches of learning. A M. Marchand, whose patience and gentleness gained him from his pupil the sobriquet of M. Doucet, taught her writing, geography, and history. A gentleman named Cajon, who had been successively chorister, soldier, deserter, capucin, and clerk, was her master in singing; she was instructed in dancing by an ugly Savoyard; a Spanish giant named Mignard taught her the guitar. Nor does this list exhaust the number of her tutors.

In matters of religion a guide was supplied in the person of her mother's young brother, priest at a

neighbouring church, to which his niece was sent to share the catechism of the poorer children of his flock. It is again characteristic that the recollection of her childish triumphs and the credit thereby accruing to her uncle found a place in the mind of the woman who was awaiting her death-sentence. In particular she records with satisfaction a victory won over a superior ecclesiastic who had come to inspect the class. "To test my knowledge and to display his own sagacity, he asked me how many orders of spirits existed in the celestial hierarchy. Convinced by the triumphant and malicious air with which he put the question that he expected to puzzle me, I replied, smiling, that though several were mentioned in the preface of the Mass, I had seen elsewhere that they counted nine, and I passed in review before him angels and archangels, thrones, dominations, etc."

Of her young uncle—her *petit oncle*—with his handsome face, kindly nature, gentle manners, and frank gaiety, she was indulgently fond, even though, having volunteered to add to his labours the task of instructing his niece in Latin, he quickly repented of the rash promise and—" *bon enfant*, lazy, and gay"—was rarely found able or willing to bestow a lesson upon the eager pupil.

It may easily have seemed to the young man that Manon had masters enough. Initial instruction in her father's art of engraving was added to her other studies, and she became sufficiently proficient to present medals of her own designing, with an inscription of appropriate verses, to those she desired to honour on a birthday or fête. In spite, however, of a natural and inherited facility, she received no encouragement to devote herself to the art, inferring from a conversation she overheard that the needful training presented an objection to its pursuit.

"Study in common with others would be necessary," Madame Phlipon observed, "and acquaintances that we do not desire would be made."

The child's days were indeed full; but if crowded, they were happy. Lessons were play to little Manon, with her quick intelligence and keen interest in all departments of knowledge. Every book upon which her small hands could be laid was devoured, her father's limited library being supplemented, partly under the rose, by works abstracted from the stores of one of his pupils. Lives of the saints, a Bible in old French, some volumes of Scarron's, the memoirs of Pontis and of La Grande Mademoiselle, Renard's travels, various plays, were amongst the books read in these early days. At nine years old her acquaintance with Plutarch's *Lives* marked an epoch in her life. "From that moment," she wrote, "I date the impressions and the ideas causing me unconsciously to become a republican."

Such was her conviction at a later period. But it must be remembered that Rousseau, the idol of her more advanced years, had likewise attributed to Plutarch's works, read at nine years old, his republican creed and his impatience of servitude; and Madame Roland's retrospective estimate of their effect upon her childish mind may not improbably have been, in part at least, imitative.

*Télémaque* and Tasso followed in due order, exciting the imagination of the little girl, identified in her own eyes with the heroines of whom she read. "To *Télémaque* I was Eucharis, to *Tancred* I was Erminia . . . it was a dream with no awakening." Yet she stirred in her sleep, and a young poet of twenty, with a sweet voice, a tender face, and colour that came and went like a girl's, who was a frequenter of her father's house, would make her heart beat faster and—perhaps—distracted her thoughts from her manifold studies.



Scholastic pursuits were not permitted to engross the whole of her time. Twice a week Manon's black hair was tortured by curl-papers or tongs into conformity with fashion ; she was arrayed in silken gowns, made like those of the court ladies, close-fitting above and spreading into voluminous skirts, and in this guise was taken to church, to walk in the Tuileries, or to visit old Madame Bimont, her grandmother, who, fallen into her second childhood, was an object to her not only of repulsion but of terror. There were also occasional family fêtes, when a marriage, a baptism, or a birthday was to be celebrated ; and visits were regularly paid to her father's parents.

There is no need to linger over these early days. It was a narrow, restricted life, modelled on the pattern of hundreds of little Parisians of her time and class, or differing from theirs solely because, an only and idolised child, she was the centre of a greater amount of attention in her home. Alike in its duties and its pleasures, it was intended to serve as the prelude to an existence of middle-class prosperity ; nor were those who had the ordering of it likely to be troubled by any forebodings of the storm that was brewing and was so soon to break over France.

When Manon was eleven years old a change came. It was 1765—the year that the Dauphin, son to Louis XV., died, leaving the burden of his inheritance to his son, a boy of Manon's age. It was also the year that the Austrian marriage first took shape in Maria Theresa's brain, and that she set herself unwittingly to compass the undoing of her little daughter, Marie Antoinette. At the quai de l'Horloge the master-engraver's child—a year older than the Archduchess—had been roused, by a shock caused by the misconduct of one of her father's apprentices, to what in Puritan phraseology would be termed “the conviction of sin.”



"I was a penitent before I was a sinner," she said, looking back upon that time of troubled and vague awakening; "from that moment I was dominated by religious ideas."

A period of uneasy devotion followed, accompanied by morbid terror and by restless and tormenting scruples. When the time drew near for her first Communion, her apprehensions increased in strength. Filled with anticipation of the coming event, no sacrifice appeared too great to ensure a right preparation for it; and though hitherto the mere suggestion of a parting from her mother had been sufficient to cause her to shed tears, she now, unprompted and sobbing, begged permission to retire for a time to a convent. The request was granted, and it was arranged that she should be placed under the care of the Dames de la Congrégation in the rue Neuve Sainte-Etienne, a teaching order enjoying a good reputation. On May 7, 1765, she entered on her new way of life, and thus ended the first stage of her childhood.

It had been a happy one. Studying the picture painted nearly thirty years later by her own hand, we gain a clear conception of the sturdy, vigorous, confident and vainglorious little figure, with the vivid, changing face; already self-conscious, already bent upon crowding into life all it could be made to contain; affectionate, warm-hearted, self-willed; the precocious knowledge conferred by books contending with the natural ignorance which is one of the graces of childhood; and prompt to question and defy an authority unable to plead reason as its justification.

## CHAPTER II

1765

The convent school—Friendship with the Cannet sisters—Visit to her grandmother—Correspondence with Sophie Cannet—Relations of mother and daughter—Impatience of existing customs.

LOOKING back over the years of storm and stress, of excitement and hope and disappointment, that lay between the months spent at the rue Neuve Sainte-Etienne and the day when she set down her memories of them on paper, it seemed to Madame Roland, owing no doubt something to the glamour conferred by distance, to have been a time of almost unclouded joy and peace. Her sacrifice had been made, and she reaped the reward.

On the very first night after she had parted in tears from her mother, rising noiselessly from her bed in the room she shared with four companions, she crept to the window and stood looking down upon the convent garden bathed in moonlight, its tall trees casting their shadows on the ground beneath the serene heights of the night-sky. In the stillness of that hour it seemed to her that God had accepted what she offered, and the child's troubled heart found rest and solace.

Nor were her expectations disappointed. Life in the convent corresponded fully to the hopes she had entertained. Religion—the religion she was afterwards to renounce—absorbed her, mind, heart, and soul. Easily stirred to the extreme of excitement, she was powerfully attracted by its mysteries, and the impression made

upon her by the beauty and solemnity of the rites of the Church remained stamped upon her memory long after their inner significance and meaning had been effaced and the attitude of a devout worshipper had been exchanged for that of an indulgent critic. When, soon after her arrival, she witnessed the ceremony of a novice taking the veil, she was filled with awe and reverence. Watching the spectacle with the fascinated gaze of a nervous and overwrought child, she threw herself into the part of the principal actor in the scene. "When she was covered with the funeral pall I shivered with terror. . . . I was no longer myself; I was she. I thought they were tearing me from my mother, and I shed floods of tears."

There is a certain luxury in the indulgence of even painful emotion, and Manon probably enjoyed her tears. She liked everything about the life upon which she had entered—the solitude of the garden where she could read or dream undisturbed; the moments spent alone in the dim church; and no doubt, though she makes no mention of it, the companionship of the *petites folles*, ready to become her playmates when she unbent so far as to permit it, was a welcome novelty. The nuns were gentle and kindly women, bound by no rule of undue austerity, of whom she retained till the last an affectionate memory.

In one respect her surroundings were unfortunate. They were not such as to correct the sense of self-importance natural in an only child. On the contrary, everything conspired to nourish and accentuate it. If Manon regarded herself as the centre of the universe, the illusion was encouraged by those to whom her unusual gifts made her a special object of interest. Her impassioned devotion won the approval, if not the admiration, of the community; her precocious learning secured her a place amongst the elder scholars; and the parish



priest of the quai de l'Horloge came in person to commend so promising a member of his flock to the ecclesiastic charged with the care of the pupils. Although the interview between the two learned gentlemen was carried on in Latin, the astute little girl did not fail to infer that the account supplied to her new guide was favourable, and her self-esteem was gratified.

Amongst the sisters she quickly made friends. Her special teacher, Mère Sainte Sophie, aged seventy, singled her out for favour; and the young lay-sister, Sœur Agathe, charged with attendance on the pupils, became devotedly attached to her and remained so long after Manon had left the convent and graduated in a wholly different school. Altogether the time passed pleasantly at the rue Neuve Sainte-Etienne, varied by weekly meetings with her parents, who came on Sundays to take their little daughter to walk in the Jardin du Roi.

A fresh interest was shortly added to her life. Summer had come when an event occurred destined to prove of no little importance during the coming years, and to lead in the end to Manon's acquaintance with her future husband. This was the arrival of two scholars, Henriette and Sophie Cannet, from Amiens.

The newcomers were regarded with interest by their schoolfellows. It was observed that Henriette, a tall girl of eighteen, wore a manifestly discontented air; her sister, Sophie, four years younger, was tearful and dejected. The reasons soon became known. Their mother, desiring that her younger daughter should pass a certain time at school, had sent the elder sister there to keep her company, and Henriette not unnaturally felt herself a victim. The two presented a marked contrast. High-spirited and gay, with varying moods, fits of quick remorse following upon outbreaks of ill-temper, affectionate and imaginative—thus Madame Roland describes the elder of the two girls who were to be the



friends of her childhood and youth. "Fond of her as you might be, she was difficult to live with."

Sophie was of another type. Prematurely calm and reasonable, level-headed, thoughtful, and sedate, she possessed little outward attraction. Yet it was to her that Manon, vehement and impulsive, attached herself with enthusiasm. She felt that in Sophie she had found a companion after her own heart, and a school-girl friendship of the most exaggerated species was formed. In religious sentiment the two were agreed, and possessed many tastes in common. Both were fond of argument. Sophie discussed, analysed; Manon, or so she imagined, played chiefly the part of listener. Sophie, at fourteen, was an adept in the art of conversation. Manon—again according to her later impressions—only knew how to answer questions. She admitted that people were singularly fond of putting them to her.

Thus, with the engrossing interest supplied by Sophie's society, the year spent in the convent passed quickly by. When Manon quitted it, it was not to return at once to her father's house. Phlipon's business took him much abroad; the supervision of the apprentices fell, in consequence, to his wife's share, leaving her little leisure to bestow upon her daughter, and it was decided that the child should spend a year under the care of the elder Madame Phlipon, her father's mother.

With a fortunate aptitude for adapting herself to circumstances, Manon saw no cause for regret in the arrangement. Meetings with her parents would be frequent, and she was fond of her grandmother. A bright little lady, full of natural gaiety, Madame Phlipon had been early left a widow, and had acted as governess in the family of a certain Madame de Boismorel until a small legacy had enabled her to take a lodging in the Île Saint-Louis. There an unmarried sister bore her

company, admired and tended her, and performed the greater part of the household duties. With these two Manon was, for the present, to take up her abode.

Her new way of life proved much to her taste. She liked the company of the two old sisters, to whom she was, once more, an object of tender interest. She liked the evening walks with tante Angélique by the riverside; the quiet of the unfrequented quays suited her present mood; and, should she need variety, her father or aunt were always ready to escort her to the convent, where she received an enthusiastic welcome in a crowded parlour.

Other visits were less to her taste, and she was already inclined to resent the patronage of the rich and great, represented by Madame de Boismorel, her grandmother's former employer.

"Comme c'est sententieux!" exclaimed this lady with kindly ridicule, as the little bourgeoisie, her pride up in arms, replied to an inquiry as to her future calling by the grandiloquent statement that she was still ignorant of its nature and had not yet attempted to decide the question—"Comme c'est sententieux! Take care she does not become a blue-stockings. It would be a great pity."

The child's answer had been intentionally vague. Like many of the nuns' pupils, she had left the rue Neuve Sainte-Etienne feeling a vocation for the cloistered life, and her aspirations coloured her dreams of the future. For all that was in her mind she found an outlet in an active correspondence carried on with Sophie Cannet, both whilst her friend remained at the convent school and after she had quitted it to return to her home at Amiens.

The letters constantly passing between the two cemented the tie formed at school, and throw a clear light upon the years of Madame Roland's youth and

early womanhood. Once or twice every week, as time went on, the closely written pages were dispatched, filled less with the events of every day than with thoughts, opinions, sentiments.

"I learnt to reflect the more because I communicated my reflections; I studied with the greater zeal because I loved to share what I had learnt; and I observed with the closer attention because I took a pleasure in description." Perhaps also she might have added that she thought in order to communicate her thoughts. The practice is not uncommon, nor is it devoid of danger.

At fourteen Manon returned to her father's house, there to resume the ordinary routine of bourgeois life. If she at first continued to cherish the design of entering the cloister, the project gradually faded from her mind. Her days were filled with lessons from qualified masters, nor had her eagerness to acquire knowledge declined. Immersed in study, she grudged, or believed that she grudged, the time devoted to occasional visits, paid or received, or spent as she grew older in joining in infrequent gaieties—a ball, or some other entertainment to which her mother would escort her. Sundays, as of old, were marked by expeditions taken together by father, mother, and daughter, and were often passed at Meudon, where the woods, solitary pools, and pine-tree alleys were more attractive to one at least of the little party than the gayer resorts of the Bois de Boulogne or Saint-Cloud.

Thus the girl grew up, in an atmosphere of peace and quiet content, her strenuous inner life, exhibited in her outpourings to Sophie, running side by side with the commonplace incidents of every day, and supplying the intellectual interest such an existence might otherwise have lacked.

"How easy it is to be happy!"—if only one knew



the way—so she once wrote, with the pathetic confidence of youth that that difficult knowledge has been acquired. She was, she declared at seventeen, happier and more contented every day.

It was in some respects a lonely life. Of intimate association with companions of her own age there is no trace; and if her affection for her mother was true and deep, ease and familiarity, as childhood was left behind, was wanting. Though Madame Phlipon's whole thoughts centred upon her child, the quiet dignity touched with outward coldness of the woman who was acquainted with what experience and sorrow have to teach was chilling at times to the vehement student of books.

She enjoyed, on the other hand, an unusual amount of liberty; her mother being curiously careful to refrain from interfering with the disposal of her time and to allow her to devote herself freely to the occupations and pursuits she loved. Only occasionally called upon to share in household duties, in shopping or cooking, she was left for the most part in possession of the leisure she valued so much. The mother, too, systematically refrained from any attempt to force the girl's confidence. She was not indeed unacquainted with the working of the young restless brain. By a tacit convention Manon had, unsolicited, adopted the habit of leaving her letters to Sophie for a certain time unsealed, well aware that Madame Phlipon took the offered opportunity of reading them, and only retaining the privilege of adding, upon occasion, a private postscript. But if it was a satisfaction to the writer to communicate to her mother in this indirect fashion opinions, tastes, and sentiments she would not have ventured to express in words, the silence maintained on the subject is significant of the relations of the two.



To Madame Phlipon the heart-searchings, the intolerance, the self-confidence, the crowding speculations, the impatience of the established order of things, expressed in the letters she read, would have seemed no more than the result of undigested information. All would quiet down as the girl grew older, and natural and domestic duties would supply an outlet for her superabundant energy. And yet the traces of discontent may have awakened in her a vague disquiet. If it is clear that, looking back, Madame Roland antedated some phases of the development of her thoughts, ideas, and beliefs, the bitterness with which, from childhood upward and with the harsh intolerance of youth, she regarded the injustice and caprice dominating the conditions of life cannot be mistaken. The world was, in her opinion, far from upright in its dealings, and social institutions had gone much astray. Though political unrest might not have penetrated to the house of the prosperous tradesman—by the nature of his craft dependent upon wealth and luxury—the spirit of revolt spreading so rapidly through the land was already alive in his daughter. Little incidents, trivial in themselves and which a few years earlier would have passed unnoticed, served to quicken the indignation of an observer on the alert to criticise and to condemn. As in her childhood Madame de Bois-morel's well-meant patronage had roused her wrath, the recognition accorded to the titles to honour possessed by a spinster, plain, poor, but of good birth, who made her home for a time with Madame Phlipon, afterwards stirred her to impatient contempt. What was there in Mademoiselle de Hannaches, ignorant, ill-educated, and old-fashioned in dress, to command respect? A more personal insult occasioned still greater indignation; when, invited by a lady in the country to dinner, Manon and her mother were relegated to the table of

the upper servants. The slight—probably quite unintentional, since it would not have occurred to the hostess that the wife and daughter of the engraver would expect to be received on terms of equality—sank deep into the heart of one of the guests, and perhaps bore fruit in her readiness to adopt the theories then becoming current.

## CHAPTER III

Youth—The question of marriage—De La Blancherie—Domestic troubles  
—The future uncertain.

EARLY youth is perhaps the time when human nature is most occupied with itself. Possibilities being untested, uncorrected by experience, hopes are naturally extravagant and the means by which they are to be realised are anxiously scrutinised. The weekly outpourings dispatched by Manon to Sophie Cannel prove that she was incessantly occupied with self-analysis. If she did not omit to bring her powers of observation to bear upon the facts of daily life, she found herself infinitely more interesting. Facts might be useful for purposes of illustration; they were little more—they are rarely more to the young. Human nature, human happiness, the means of securing it, self-discipline, the restraint to be exercised over imagination, passion, and sentiment, with all kindred subjects, were discussed in letters proving the inborn and remarkable gift of language and expression belonging to the writer. In spite, however, of her learning and her philosophy, the actualities of life could not be wholly ignored, and the possible husbands suggested for her acceptance were in turn submitted to the judgment of the friend who continued to hold the predominant place in her heart.

It is curious to contrast the dreams indulged by Manon Phlipon at eighteen with what was to follow. A quiet, unpretentious existence, a simple little house in



the country, close to a church, a garden wherein art was to second, not eclipse, nature, a lonely wood, green fields, sloping hills, running water, a good library and the companionship of Sophie Cannet—this was the picture painted by the little Parisian as she sat at her window looking down upon the fashionable groups loitering on the Pont Neuf. One remembers the early visions of Saint-Just, somewhat in the same strain—a country life, quiet and peace, a wife and children “pour mon cœur,” and leisure filled by study. Both girl and boy were to be far from attaining the realisation of their dreams.

It had not hitherto occurred to Manon that more would be necessary to afford her full satisfaction. At an age when most girls were provided with homes of their own, she was in no haste to leave her father's roof. She was content—so she told Sophie. Her God, her happiness, her friend, sufficed her. “Enfin,” she added naïvely, “je jouis de moi-même.”

Her parents could not be expected to concur in these views. Philipon would have wished his daughter to make a good match. His wife, conscious of failing health, was anxious to place the girl in hands more fitted than her father's for the charge. Nor were opportunities, many and various, wanting. Manon was by no means deficient in personal attraction. Her face, without regularity of line or what could be called beauty, made up for the lack of them by its charm. The portraits of her, mostly of doubtful authenticity, show the defects of feature; the descriptions of contemporaries prove that defect of feature was no bar to their admiration. “I think,” wrote Champagneux, intimately acquainted with her, “it is as difficult to describe this woman's face exactly as it was to paint it.” Four artists, he added, had failed in the endeavour, owing to the impossibility of representing her changing moods. At-

tempting to give a description of herself, Madame Roland admitted that the task was not an easy one. The mouth was large ; yet, if many excelled it in perfection of line, not one, said the owner, had a more tender and attractive smile. Her skin was good, her complexion bright, her eyes—dark grey<sup>1</sup>—were set under well-marked eyebrows, dark like her hair. Her hands were long and slender ; and the peculiarity of her countenance was its rapid changes and varying expression, according to the person to whom she was speaking. “It does not belong to all,” she added, with the candour ever characterising her attitude of self-observation, “to think me pretty, or to feel my worth.” Camille Desmoulins, for instance, had been justified in wondering that, at her age and with so little beauty, she had possessed what he called worshippers. True, she had never addressed him ; but had she done so, she would probably have been cold, if not repellent.

In figure she was neither tall nor short, was well proportioned and fully developed, with the sloping shoulders admired in her day. Her movements were light and buoyant, and she had the beauty of perfect health.

Into the history of the manifold suitors who presented themselves *en foule* to sue for the hand of the only child of a man reputed to be carrying on a prosperous business it is not necessary to enter at length. The interest attaching to the separate episodes—in which the romantic element was conspicuously absent—is small. Respectable tradesmen, more especially jewellers or goldsmiths, a neighbouring butcher, a Provençal doctor and others swelled the list, each being proposed for M. Phlipon’s approval in due form by their respective kinsfolk. Flattered and amused, her father would refer the question to Manon, and allow her to dictate his replies, usually taking the

<sup>1</sup> Upon the question of their colour opinions differed. Riouffe calls them black, Beugnot blue.

form of a decided negative. Her views on the subject of her settlement in life were marked by cool common sense. Indulging no extravagant ideal of the marriage tie, she was nevertheless fixed in her determination to bestow her hand upon no man out of sympathy with her intellectually and morally, or with her conception of life and its duties ; she regarded the matter, for the rest, with the dispassionate impartiality of a nature unawakened to the possibilities before her. At a full comprehension of those possibilities she was indeed to arrive strangely late.

“In the habit of making a study of myself,” she afterwards wrote in reference to a match brought nearer than others to a successful issue, “of regulating my affections and controlling my imagination, and penetrated by the severity and sublimity of a wife’s duties, I did not perceive what difference a little gentleness, more or less, in a character could make to me, and what [a husband] could exact more than I exacted of myself. I reasoned like a philosopher who makes his calculations, and like a hermit acquainted neither with men nor with passions. I measured the morals of my species by my own tranquil and affectionate heart. This was for long my failing ; it has been the sole source of my errors. I hasten to point it out : it is to give in advance the key to my cabinet.”

The passage should be borne in mind. Madame Roland is right in saying that it explains much in her subsequent conduct and history.

Though, amongst the men desirous of obtaining her hand, those had not been wanting upon whom, had circumstances been favourable, she might have consented not altogether unwillingly to bestow it, the only person who at this period came near to making a serious impression upon her heart was a certain young man, not more than twenty-two, a lover of letters and science,



of good birth, intelligent, well educated, and destined for the profession of the law. For M. Pahin de La Blancherie she had a genuine liking—to develop later on into something stronger—and she admitted that the thought of a marriage with him might not have displeased her.

La Blancherie, however, was not, like the opulent tradesmen who were his rivals, in a position to maintain a wife; and Manon wisely concurred in her parents' refusal to allow her to enter upon an engagement of indefinite duration. When, after an absence of some months in Italy, he returned to Paris, his financial prospects were no better, and though, trusting in his daughter's good sense and cool head, M. Phlipon did not forbid him the house, nothing but friendship at this date ensued, and Manon went no further than to confess to Sophie a certain regret that circumstances had put marriage with the young man out of the question, since, in similarity of thought, his mind seemed to reflect her own. It may be that her liking for him, combined with a faint hope that the obstacles to their union might be removed at some future date, added strength to her desire to remain for the present free from other ties. At the same time, submitting her sentiments to the usual process of analysis, she was able to rejoice that she had not been affected by her regard for La Blancherie to the extent of being thereby rendered incapable of bestowing her heart upon another man.

The man upon whom she should bestow it did not meantime appear; and her mother's married life, as her eyes were gradually opened to its conditions, served as an object-lesson of perils incurred by a passive acceptance of an uncongenial lot. The silence maintained on the subject between mother and daughter was broken on one occasion. Madame Phlipon had placed before the girl the advantages of a suggested match. A worthy man

was in question ; Manon was now twenty, and her choice would become more limited. If the present aspirant had not all the refinement—*délicatesse*—she sought, he would love her and she would be happy. So the mother reasoned.

Manon sighed. “A happiness like yours,” she said.

Her mother had nothing to reply ; there was in truth no answer to make. The divergence in tastes and disposition existing from the first between husband and wife had insensibly widened. Domestic peace had been preserved. Where wills or opinions came into conflict, Madame Phlipon had yielded in a silence so complete that only when childhood was left behind had Manon become aware of the effort involved, and throwing herself, in some sort, into the breach, had become, in her own language, her mother’s watch-dog. Between mother and daughter, no explanation had taken place. Madame Phlipon was not a woman to utter her griefs, and she would have shrunk from saddening her child by an explicit confession of failure. Manon too kept silence as to what she had discovered. Recognising her father’s failings and ready to resist him to his face, a convention had been tacitly established by which no reproach was permitted to attach to him in his absence.

In other matters besides those that were purely domestic M. Phlipon’s conduct supplied abundant cause both for blame and reproach. As years went by, speculation had usurped to a large extent the attention that should have been devoted to his legitimate craft. Amusement, pleasure and commerce combined, together with the gaming-table and lotteries, absorbed him, with the natural results. The artistic aptitudes which constituted part of his stock-in-trade suffered ; his sight became less keen, his hand less sure ; his wife and daughter

looking on at the menace to material prosperity involved in his course of life in a silence broken at times by the half-confidences that refuse to clothe apprehension in words. Outward tranquillity continued to pervade the household; strangers perceived nothing amiss. But the future was growing increasingly uncertain.



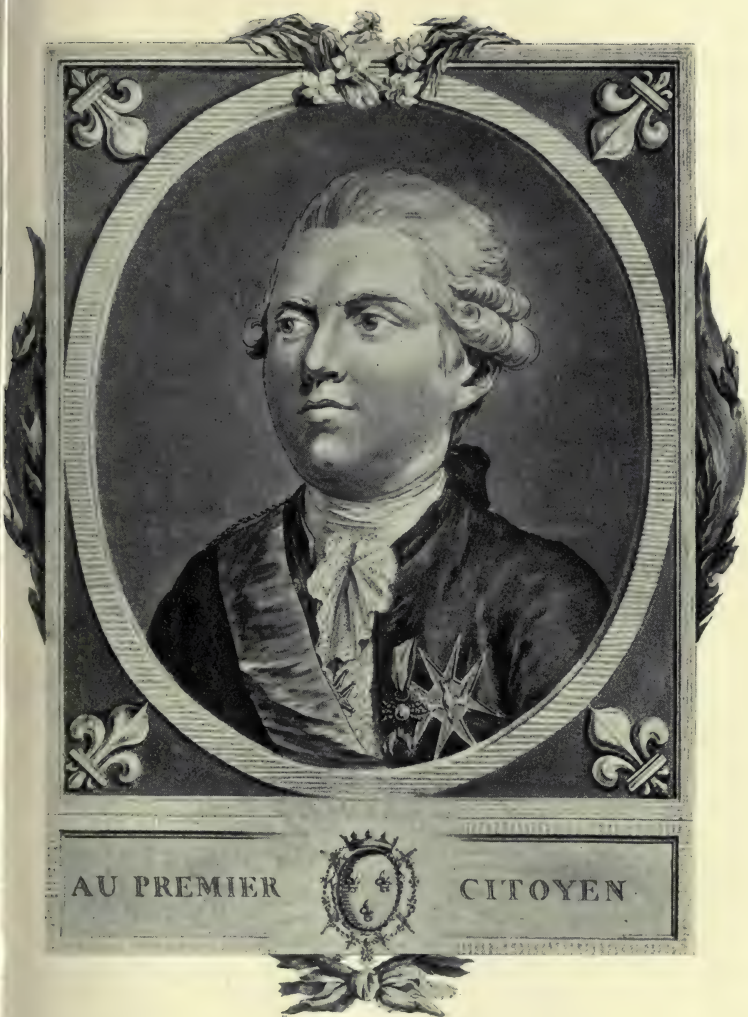
## CHAPTER IV

Death of Louis XV.—Accession of Louis XVI.—Manon's indifference to politics—Her visit to Versailles—The political situation—Riots in Paris and the provinces—Manon's reflections.

THE year 1774—Manon was twenty—was an eventful one for France. On May 10 the reign of Louis XV., once termed the Bien-Aimé—the name must have sounded like irony—came to an end, and he died, regretted by few save those whose power and influence hung on his life. The nation, assisting at the death-bed, hoped for better things. “An old era passed away . . . his era of sin and tyranny and shame, and behold, a new era is come, the future all the brighter that the past was base.”<sup>1</sup>

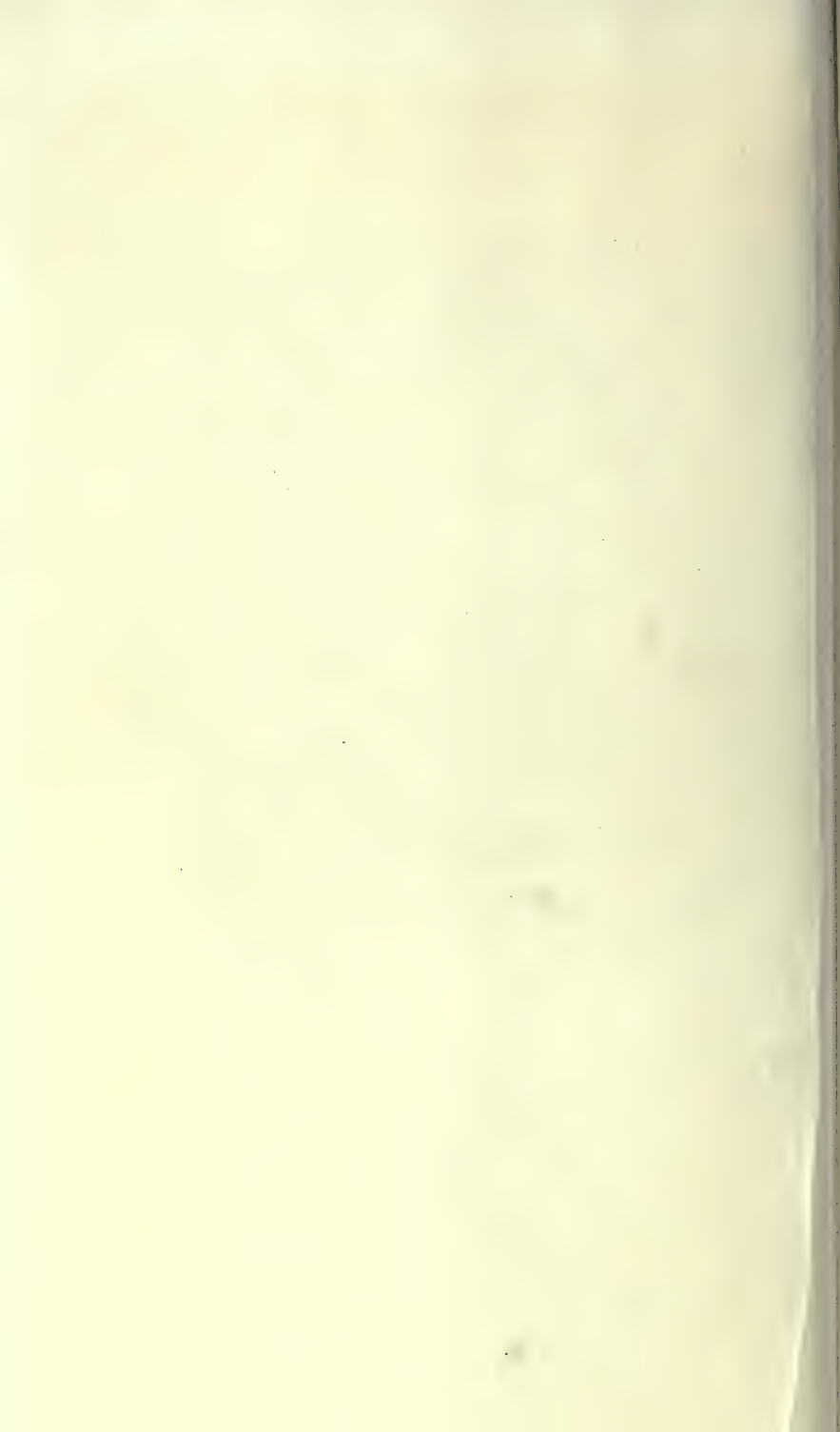
What was to be the nature of that new era? What was to be the outcome of the hopes and anticipations with which France hailed it? The following years were to show. At present the forecast was sanguine and the future rose-coloured. In that future not many women were destined to play so conspicuous a part as the daughter of the master-engraver in the quai de l'Horloge, few were more penetrated with the spirit of her age. Yet for the moment it is curious to observe how small was the amount of attention bestowed by Manon, open-eyed and alert as she was, upon the situation. The abstractions of philosophy, discussions as to the nature and character of mankind, continued to

<sup>1</sup> Carlyle's *French Revolution*, bk. i. ch. iv.



LOUIS XVI.

From an engraving by Le Cour, after a picture by Bertaux.





engross her, to the dwarfing, if not exclusion, of more practical questions.

"How indifferent is a heart occupied by matters which interest it," she wrote to Sophie with unconscious egoism—an egoism mistaking itself for superiority—"to the most important events! Under other circumstances a king's death, the wishes of the country, its fears, its hopes, the accession of a new sovereign, would have supplied us with material for reflection in several letters, and we have not yet said a single word about it."

What was it that she found, and expected her correspondent to find, more interesting? The passage occurs towards the end of an epistle containing an interminable disquisition designed to prove education the universal panacea for every ill incident to humanity, evil the outcome of error and ignorance alone. Absorbed by subjects of this kind, Manon remained unmoved by the wave of excitement and joy that had greeted the new King's accession.

The outlook, nevertheless—setting aside the evils for which it was hoped that a cure might now be found—might well have arrested the attention even of one little concerned with political problems. The youth of the ill-starred couple who had succeeded to the inheritance which was to prove so heavy a burden, in itself lent them interest. Louis, on whom the hopes of the nation centred, was Manon's own age; his wife—a year younger—had displayed, in dealing with the anomalies of her father-in-law's court, a power of resistance and a strength of will going far to prove that she would not be content to remain a cipher. But to all this Manon scarcely gave a thought. Her interests, so far, lay elsewhere; and the field of abstract speculation and discussion afforded her all the necessary vent for her mental restlessness. To write and to reason was, she told Sophie, her daily bread. With work, no

one was happier ; without it, her intellectual activity became a torment ; and though admitting that to be of use was the first duty of man and that the chiefest virtue was love of the public good, she had not yet conceived the possibility of struggling against the fate making her one of a sex feeble, inept, and often useless.

In the autumn of this same year she was brought into closer contact with what was going forward by a visit to Versailles. A woman in attendance upon the new Queen and acquainted with Manon's uncle, the Abbé Bimont, lent her apartments at the palace to him and his sister, and the few days spent there afforded a pleasant variety upon the routine of daily life in the quai de l'Horloge.

When the visit was over, and Manon had regained—as she told Sophie, turning her ridicule for once upon herself—her gravity, her great ideas, her serious bearing, she could moralise over the lessons taught by what she had witnessed ; at the time she confessed to having assumed an ease, a levity and a cheerfulness more appropriate to the abode of kings and courtiers.

The week at the palace must have been full of new experiences. The King and Queen lived in public ; of privacy they enjoyed little or none. They belonged to the people, and the people vindicated their rights over them. Even the great dining-hall was thrown open once every week, that all who chose might see their sovereigns eat ; and domiciled in the palace itself Manon must have had many opportunities of watching the girl whose death upon the scaffold was to take place not a month before her own.

In spite of the light-mindedness which she admitted, the days at Versailles had not passed without serious reflection ; and, true to her habit of self-analysis, Manon had thanked God that her lot was cast in obscurity. From what she knew of herself—and she

knew all that constant introspection could tell her—she believed that, had she been near the throne, her present affection for the sovereign would have been replaced by resentment, carried to the point of hatred, at the inequality between him and his subjects. For the rest, if a good king seemed to her worthy of something approaching to worship, she had already decided that a republic was the more ideal form of government.

Such was the result of the visit, as contained in a letter to Sophie. Madame Roland, in her memoirs, looking back, supplies more details. The party had been accompanied by Mademoiselle de Hannaches, the lady of good blood and inferior intellect and education for whom Manon indulged so marked a contempt; and upon this occasion again she found it difficult to tolerate the deference accorded to birth as distinct from intrinsic worth or merit. Again, too, the pride of the bourgeoisie, conscious of mental and moral superiority, was in arms. The notice taken of her—no doubt kindly meant—she resented as patronage; the scenes she witnessed, the life of the palace, the banquets, the gaming-tables, the presentations, were regarded by her with lofty contempt. Asked by her mother, at the close of the visit, whether she had enjoyed it, she gave vent to her sentiments.

“Provided it ends well,” she replied. “A few more days, and I should have acquired so much hatred for the people I see that I should not know what to do with it.”

“What harm have they done you?” was Madame Philpon’s quiet reply.

“They have caused me to feel injustice and to contemplate absurdities,” answered the youthful censor grandiloquently; and sighed as she compared what she had witnessed with Athens.

She had been a looker-on at the pageant of a court,



at a King, honest, dull, well meaning, a figure-head of royalty, in whom there was nothing to justify either the torrent of hatred directed against him not twenty years later, or the passion of loyalty leading men to give their lives gladly for his sake ; at a Queen well calculated to attract hatred and love. But both alike were representative of a principle and a tradition, and it is principles and traditions that, clothed in flesh, rouse the passions of hate and love to the highest point.

If Manon's mood at Versailles had been one of incipient revolt, reflecting that which was abroad, it underwent some modification as the months went by and she caught fire from the enthusiasm evoked by the measures inaugurating the new reign, by the reforms initiated by the King, the suppression of useless offices and the reconstitution of the Parlement. After all, she wrote, what could be feared from that body ? It was like an ancient ruin, still an object of veneration, but no longer a barrier against the royal authority—a powerless though cherished idol to be restored to its worshippers. That this should have been accomplished testified a respect for law, and received a corresponding welcome. Summarising the matter, she gave expression to the views of the situation taken at the time—an enlightened ministry, a well-meaning and docile King, an amiable and beneficent Queen, an easy, agreeable, and decent court, an honourable legislative body, a charming nation only desirous of being enabled to love its master, a kingdom full of resources. “Ah, how happy we are going to be !” so ran the hopeful forecast, the joyful anticipation so quickly to be overcast.

France, like Manon, expected to be happy. The age of gold was come. The very exaggeration of hope ensured disappointment, and when weeks and months had passed by and no sensible improvement

had taken place in the condition of the suffering millions, mutterings of popular discontent began to herald more serious trouble to come. By a hungry nation fierce animadversions could not fail to be made upon a Government incapable of performing the miracle of multiplying loaves.

It was true that Turgot, honest, upright, as representative of the new spirit as the King was of the old, was doing his best as Comptroller-General to deal with the tangle placed in his hands. Corn laws were altered, reforms initiated; but famished men cannot afford to wait for measures, however wise, to take effect, and by May 1775—a year after the King's accession—the impatience of the populace had found open vent. Versailles itself was visited by an angry mob, addressed by Louis in person from the balcony. On the following day the agitation had reached Paris, the bakers' shops were besieged, in many cases stormed, and a panic spread through the city, shopkeepers putting up their shutters and remaining in a condition of alarmed defence.

And Manon looked on. Turning, at the end of a letter filled with philosophical speculations, to what was taking place under her eyes, she described to Sophie the scenes in the streets, men who carried their captured loaves in triumph, soldiers set to guard the bakers' shops; the tension of men's nerves being so great that an incursion of a few children into a church sufficed to cause the entrances to be shut as against an invasion of the populace. Sights like these, Manon added, gave rise to new emotions and to many reflections—which she did not communicate to her friend. The answer to the Petition of Grievances presented by the crowd at Versailles to their King—the two leaders hanged on a gallows forty feet high—might have given rise to more. For the present the tumult was driven underground.

Of the disturbances in provincial centres Manon wrote in the same tranquil tone. The people's agitation, she observed, was said to be due rather to secret instigation than to want. It took every one by surprise. Scarcity was no more pressing than in the time of the late King. The present sovereign had done all that man could do. Time only was required. The people, however, were hungry. They spoke of nothing but bread—it was thus in all times and places. For the rest, exaggeration was rife ; and Manon, quitting politics, fell instead to describing the graceful customs existing in Salency of choosing a *rosière*—a Rose Queen—and dilating upon the charms of the country life of which she knew so little.

Save the two ringleaders whose lives had paid the penalty of the riot, the crowd received a pardon ; superficial tranquillity was restored ; nor were there any to prophesy that the turbulent scenes of May 1775 were no more than a shadow, a rehearsal, of the terrible ones to follow. Yet not six months earlier Manon, like other Parisians, had received an object-lesson in the savagery residing in human nature, and more especially in the excitable Latin races. Two young men, convicted of parricide, had been condemned to be broken on the wheel, and Paris kept holiday. Before the window whence she watched the throng with fascinated and horror-stricken eyes, masses of people passed by on their way to the place where the barbarous sentence was to be executed. The streets were like an anthill ; the roofs of the houses were utilised as vantage-points of observation ; and from the spot where the ghastly scene was enacted the cries of the victims reached the quai de l'Horloge, the crowd applauding with clapping of hands and shouts of joy, like the audience at a theatre. Was there a veritable taste for blood in the human heart, the girl questioned, or was



it merely a desire for strong sensation? "I own," she wrote, "that I have both a great contempt and a great love for men. They are so wicked and so mad that it is impossible not to despise them ; on the other hand, they are so unhappy that one cannot help pitying and loving them."

Madame Roland was to indulge both sentiments until the end of her life.

## CHAPTER V

Death of Madame Phlipon—Manon's sorrow—Her heart-searchings—Religious developments—Studies and compositions—The *Nouvelle Héloïse*—Rousseau's influence—Love affair with de La Blancherie.

IN the summer of 1775 the even tenor of Manon's life was rudely disturbed, and she was brought for the first time into intimate and personal contact with death. Some little time earlier a slight stroke of paralysis—represented to her, by a merciful euphemism, as rheumatism—had forewarned her mother of coming danger; a gradual decline of strength had followed, causing her daughter pangs of vague apprehension. Madame Phlipon was, however, comparatively young—not more than fifty; death is rarely envisaged as a practical possibility by those unfamiliarised with its approaches; and when the end came the girl, who had never yet met the great enemy at close quarters, was wholly unprepared for the blow and was stunned by the shock. The single person, save Sophie Cannel, for whom she felt a deep affection was gone—she was alone.

Manon was twenty-one when, deprived of her mother's care, she was left to find her way as best she might amongst the shoals and quicksands of life, with none to whom she naturally turned for support and guidance, none to whose judgment she felt she could submit her own. With the uncle who had been the friend of her childhood, and was to remain her friend till the end of his life, a temporary coolness had eclipsed

the intimacy of earlier years. Her grandmother, who had become an inmate of her son's house, had introduced into it an element of restless discontent rather than of added affection; her father's perfunctory expressions of regret for the wife he had lost served to accentuate the gulf between himself and a daughter who mourned all she had loved most. "It seems," she wrote, "as if he himself had torn away the veil of respect through which I had hitherto regarded him." Kindness on the part of more distant relations, tenderness and care during her period of collapse, were not wanting; nor was the girl ungrateful. But she recognised the fact that she stood alone. And thus, uncompanied, she entered upon a new phase of existence.

In many ways she was well equipped for the battle of life. Amongst her characteristics was that hardy self-confidence, that almost unlimited belief in her powers—largely justified by their nature and extent—which is so important an auxiliary in the race and goes far to ensure success. If few women, in a day when faith, if not in God in man, had reached so great a height, would have been capable of attaining to the position Marie Jeanne Roland was to achieve, few would have imagined themselves to be capable of it, and diffidence would have crippled effort. Humility may scale heaven; it often tends to leave earth's fortresses unassailed, and is a poor co-operator in the building of our terrestrial Babels. Her mind and intellect were trained and ordered. To an insatiable appetite for knowledge she added a singular power of acquiring it, and—more rare in women—of systematising it when acquired.

So far as was possible at her age she had made herself acquainted with the weapons supplied her by nature, had proved and tried them, bringing to the task of self-observation a close and minute attention; and, sincerely seeking to conform practice to theory,



had learnt to govern her impulses, curb her imagination, and direct her conduct by rules first prescribed by religion and later by philosophy. The intense interest she found in the exploration of that "colony of God, the soul," continued to be made evident by the registration of her discoveries in that domain, frankly communicated to her friend. She had come to the conclusion, she had told Sophie at an earlier date, that self-love—often playing her ugly tricks—was her dominant failing, adding the naïve acknowledgment that she could find no other defect.

"Amongst the great number of faults I am convinced I must have is that of knowing little of any except this. You cannot imagine how much this ignorance confounds and surprises me. I am only partly consoled by the recognition of my self-love, of which I have a copious dose and which must be the origin of this ignorance, as well as the veil concealing them from me."

The passage is an illustration alike of her minute investigations and of her candour in avowing a confessedly unattractive quality. It also shows that she did not, like some others, shrink from laying her finger upon what was no doubt her vulnerable point. Her diagnosis was correct; there can be no doubt that, from first to last, the frailty to which she confessed was her snare. In the same way, moods, temper, qualities, were all analysed, to be docketed and placed in their proper order. Introspection was the habit of her life.

"Unconscious of her worth . . .," says Carlyle, describing the woman he considered the noblest of all living Frenchwomen, "of her greatness, of her crystal clearness, genius, the creature of sincerity and nature . . . blessed rather whilst *unseen*, even of herself."

The eulogy is strangely chosen. Was Manon, one wonders, ever unconscious of her powers? Was she ever unseen of herself? Rather, had she not, from the very

first, and though ignorant of the purposes they were to serve, marshalled all her forces of body, soul, and spirit, passed them severally in review, and assigned to each its proper place and value in the battle of life ?

With the assistance of her memoirs, supplemented by her earlier letters, it is possible to arrive at a more or less definite conception of the views she evolved during the years separating childhood from maturity. It is clear, comparing the one source of information with the other, that, in retrospect, she antedated the sequences of thoughts and ideas ; her correspondence with Sophie proving that it was not until she was eighteen that the first serious doubts of the claims of the religion in which she had been brought up presented themselves to her mind, and then only to be kept at bay by all the force of her will. But if in her description of her transition from a condition of emotional faith to one, if not of actual negation, of suspended judgment she supplemented the results of earlier study by the conclusions of later life, the process was plainly in progress at the time of her mother's death, and the account she gives of it may be briefly summarised here.

Marie Jeanne Phlipon embodied to a marked degree the spirit of her time. Religion was then at its lowest ebb in France ; and Christianity, sincere and genuine amongst the peasantry, had been almost universally abjured by the men of education and culture at whose feet she sat. It would have been therefore singular had she continued to maintain without a struggle the attitude of her devout childhood with regard to the Catholic faith. At an age when systems of philosophy and theories of the universe have seldom been taken into serious account, Manon had been absorbed by these studies. Nothing in the shape of such literature came amiss to her. She pored alike over the works of the Fathers of the Church, of Helvetius, Diderot, Bossuet,

d'Argens, d'Alembert, Raynal, and scores of other writers. When the treatises of the Christian apologists were placed in her hands she did not refuse to read them ; but she also procured the works against which they were directed, and upon the foundations she began at this period to lay were doubtless based her future conceptions of human society, of the duties and rights of man and of his relations to God and his fellows.

Upon her researches in the realm of metaphysics and philosophy, no less than upon practical questions, she brought to bear a spirit of eager curiosity and a keen and shrewd intelligence rarely tempered by diffidence or shadowed by doubt as to her gifts of perception and discernment. To the enthusiasm and zeal of the explorer she added an ardent and sincere desire to discover the truth. Confident of her capacity for arranging the relations of man with man upon a right basis, she was scarcely more inclined to question her power of readjusting the relations of man with God by the light of knowledge, reflection, and reason. "In a few words," she wrote afterwards, "I trace the result of some years of meditation and study, in the course of which I sometimes shared in the exactingness of the Deist, the rigorism of the atheist, and the indifference of the sceptic." By this route she was finally landed in what may be described as an uncertain hope, accompanied by belief of the impossibility that hope should find confirmation in proof. Pure materialism she instinctively rejected. "In the silence of my chamber or in the dryness of discussion I can concur with the atheist and materialist as to the insolubility of certain questions. But in the midst of the country and contemplating nature, my stirred heart is lifted up to the life-giving principle by which they are animated, to the intelligence regulating them, to the goodness lending them so great a charm, and . . . I discern beyond this life the reward



of sacrifice and the joy of reunion. How? in what manner? I know not. I only feel that it must be so."

These being the vague and largely negative conclusions she reached with regard to spiritual matters, she nevertheless continued for a time to make terms with religion, and conformed to the established usage in matters of worship, "her age, her sex, and her position making it a duty," and because to act otherwise would have caused, at first, disquiet to her mother, and, later, to an old servant to whom she was attached. This course of conduct—curious in a woman never otherwise lacking in sincerity—was connived at by her confessor, who, after vain efforts to direct her steps in a straighter path, finally "s'accommodait avec bon sens de me trouver raisonnable."

Whilst she gradually assumed the attitude thus described towards religion, her conclusions with regard to the relations of man with man were clear. In the individual, harmony between conviction and conduct was essential—"l'unité du moi personnel." Moral well-being, like physical health, consisted in the concurrence of the several parts of the organisation for the production of a single result; virtue lay in the regulation of conduct by a true intelligence. But happiness not being self-subsisting and independent, part of it must be renounced in order that it may be enjoyed as a whole. In a community all is relative, and reason itself dictates self-abnegation, since to be opposed to the interest of the majority is to be encompassed by foes. As symmetry and grandeur in art, so goodness and generosity in nature, are necessarily objects of admiration and love, and this independently of religious doctrine and teaching. These were the initial conclusions gradually reached by the young student as she read her books of philosophy or worked out problems in algebra and geometry. If they present few features of novelty or originality, they brought to Manon a sense of rest and

peace, affording a refuge from the disturbance created by the intrusion of doubt and difficulty into the realms alike of faith and of social duty, and seeming to her "a haven in the tempest."

In consonance, again, with the spirit of her time, she had begun to emancipate herself in some sort from limits of nationality, and to feel the awakening of that cosmopolitan love of mankind so characteristic of the revolution. "Humanity, sentiment," she wrote the year before her mother's death, "unite me to every living thing. A Carribee interests me; I am affected by the fate of a Kaffir. Alexander desired new worlds to conquer. I want new worlds to love." But if her sympathies theoretically embraced the universe, her country and her love for it were gradually becoming the factors in her life they were to continue till the end. Such was Manon at the time of her mother's death.

The melancholy months that followed passed heavily away. Sophie Cannet was in Paris during the summer, and her companionship did something to alleviate the pressure of Manon's grief. She pursued her studies with even greater ardour than before; the art of composition, which she had always loved, became more and more a resource, and under the title of *Œuvres de Loisir et reflexions diverses* she was making a collection of her scattered literary efforts. Yet though writing was a necessity to her, she never contemplated publication, and regarded the idea of becoming known as an author with a nervous horror singular in a woman of her bold and hardy nature.

"Mademoiselle," observed some one not long after this period, "however you may try to avoid it, you will end by writing a book."

"It will then be under some one else's name," she answered, "for I will gnaw my fingers off sooner than become an author."

Soon after Madame Phlipon's death a fresh interest was introduced into her life and a new and notable impulse given to the thoughts taking shape in her mind. It was a turning-point in her intellectual history when a friend, anxious to divert her from the absorbing subject of her loss, placed the *Nouvelle Héloïse* in her hands.

In spite of the eagerness she showed in devouring all the books she could obtain, Rousseau had hitherto remained little known to her. Looking back and seeking to discover the reason of this, she was disposed to believe that her mother—contrary to her usual habit of non-interference—had kept the *Héloïse* out of the way of one too ready to catch fire—*se passionner*. Had this been the case, she owned that the precaution might have been wise, and that it was well that she had not been earlier acquainted with Rousseau. "He would," she said, "have made me mad." When, at twenty-one, she read the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, its effect was analogous to that produced by Plutarch upon her as a child. Plutarch had first lit her enthusiasm for public virtue and for liberty. Rousseau taught her what happiness could be. To his works, she wrote some months later, she attributed all that was best in her. Her soul had been enkindled and ennobled by his genius. The woman capable of reading *Héloïse* without being the better for it, or desiring to be better, would never rise above the average.

It is difficult to determine the real importance of the influence thus exercised upon her character and views of life, at a time when men and women were proud to call themselves Rousseau's disciples. There can be no question that, consciously or unconsciously, she formed herself for the future upon the model he supplied, and with so much success that Lemontey, on first meeting her, found his conception of Julie singularly embodied, the illusion being rendered more complete by her con-



versation. In some respects the cult was a doubtful advantage. To conformity with the principles dictating Rousseau's *Confessions* M. Join-Lambert attributes in part the coarseness of certain passages in her memoirs. It may also be the case that the admiration for the *Héloïse* rendered her more accessible to emotional excitement than she might otherwise have proved. Her first real love-affair was certainly coincident with it.

Amongst her many suitors it will be remembered that she had singled out M. Pahin de La Blancherie as the object of a liking which, though not sufficiently strong to disturb her equilibrium to a serious extent, had been greater than any she had bestowed upon his rivals. He had now been absent from Paris for close upon two years ; and though Manon had parted from him with regret, any impression he had made upon her heart had had time to fade. When he reappeared in the capital, four months after her mother's death, the intercourse between them was to assume a different character.

Entering the house, ignorant of the loss she had sustained, he was startled and shocked by the change he perceived in her.

"Some one is ill?" he exclaimed.

"Some one is dead," was her reply.

As they fell into talk, mutual confidences took the place of ordinary conversation. If Manon had had sorrows La Blancherie had not been without them ; and, ready to give sympathy, he also demanded it. As some times chances, intimacy had increased in absence. They had many interests in common. Both were young, both proud of their intellectual gifts. He had brought for her perusal proof-sheets of a work on the eve of publication he had a scheme of joint authorship to propose ; youth called to youth, and coming close upon the stupor of her great grief, he brought at once a new factor into

her life. In his writings Manon recognised a reflection of her sentiments. "I dare not judge of this young man," she told Sophie; "he is too like me. But . . . if I did not love virtue already, he would inspire me with a taste for it."

Like other girls, she had had her dreams, and had formed her ideals of the man to whom she would give herself. "From fourteen to sixteen I wanted a man of the world; from sixteen to eighteen a clever man; since the age of eighteen I have wanted a true philosopher." In La Blancherie she conceived that she had found one—a spirit answering to her own. The symptoms were, however, the same as if a common lover had been in question. In his company she was conscious of a sweet and charming melancholy and—a significant reversal of her ordinary habits—she reasoned little and felt much. Less than three weeks later she was confessing her inability to combat a passion only stimulated by obstacles.

That it would encounter obstacles was certain. In spite of her twenty-one years, in spite of her independence of judgment and her self-confidence, M. Phlipon was to be reckoned with, and saw nothing to incline him to view with favour the suit of a penniless young writer, with little to recommend him from a worldly point of view save the fact that he was well born. Receiving a hint that, should his visits be continued, he might risk receiving a rebuff, the lover accepted, "pale as death," his dismissal, leaving Manon as disconsolate as any unphilosophical girl of her age, and no less indignant than others before and after her with "the bizarre prejudices and the barbarous institutions placed in opposition to the most sacred longings of nature."

In two or three weeks she was nevertheless able to report amendment in her condition. If her love still continued, she had regained her calm, and the first had

become a deep river which, having hollowed out its bed, flowed in silence. La Blancherie loved her; he was striving to deserve her; each was endeavouring, for the sake of the other, to improve. She judged him by her heart, similar to his.

It was to be shown that she was mistaken in so judging him. The sequel of this first romance, extending over some nine months, may be given here. Assured of her lover's affection, certain of her own, persuaded of the permanence of both, Manon had resigned herself to the situation, though with interludes of what she would herself have termed *folie*. "My state varies with the hours of the day," she told Sophie. "Once immersed in science and study, adieu to love—gaiety, strength, activity return. In my philosophical humour D. L. B. sometimes appears a little insignificant. But turn the hour-glass and I am mad. This gives rise in me to many reflections on human nature."

It is to be noted that this cool analysis of her condition was written after a first visit from Roland had plainly diverted her attention from her unfortunate love-affair. One from La Blancherie only two days after—the first for months—sufficed to reduce her to a state of despair. Others had been present, the common-places of intercourse had alone been possible; he looked ill and changed, was perhaps dying—a single word from her lips might restore him to life and health. Should that word not be spoken? Unable to remain silent, she wrote a letter containing indeed no explicit confession of her love, but destined to assure him that she was not indifferent. Enclosing it to Sophie, as an impartial judge, she begged her to read, and, if she thought well, to send it. In her present state she could not trust herself to decide the question. "Love has conquered me; I can no longer control myself."

Sophie decided that the letter might go, and there



the matter rested ; Manon remaining convinced that, reading between the lines, her lover would not fail to comprehend her meaning, and that, like herself, he would continue true to the intangible bond which united them.

It was in June 1776 that an end was practically put to the situation. At the Luxemburg Manon chanced to meet La Blancherie, when she observed with consternation that he was wearing a feather. It was a shock to her. How could that ornament be reconciled with the philosophy, the simplicity and the way of thinking that had endeared the young man so greatly to her ? Worse was to follow. A friend who was with her, ignorant of any special interest felt by Manon in the man to whom she had bowed, made the casual remark that he was in search of an heiress, had made proposals of marriage to two, and was called the lover of the eleven thousand virgins.

Though clinging for a time to the belief that he might have been maligned, Manon's confidence in La Blancherie was rudely shaken, and the incident marked the beginning of the end of her first romance. When some months later he made a fresh attempt to re-knit his relations with her, it resulted in failure, and the two parted finally.

## CHAPTER VI

Friendship with M. de Boismorel—Acquaintance with Roland—First impressions—Growing liking for him—Turgot dismissed—Visit to Rousseau—M. de Sainte-Lette and M. de Sévelinges.

MANON'S first interview with the man who was to become her husband had taken place at the very time that her passion for La Blancherie had reached its high-water mark. But before turning to the acquaintance which was to have so all-important an influence on her life, a subordinate relationship belonging to the period may be noticed. She had never been so much engrossed by her love-affair as to allow it to exclude other occupations and interests, and during the months dominated by the young man a close friendship—serving amongst other things to mark the social advancement of the engraver's daughter—had been established between herself and M. de Boismorel, her grandmother's former pupil and son of the lady whose good-humoured patronage and ridicule she had resented in her childish days. Times were now changed. *Le Sage de Bercy*—it was thus that she was accustomed to designate Boismorel in her letters to Sophie—had discovered in the granddaughter of his old governess a kindred spirit, had invited her to his house, where she received a kindly welcome from his mother and his wife, and a correspondence had been kept up in which Manon discovered that the sage showed more of his true self than in conversation or in the presence of others. To her he

supplied a real want. Educated, a scholar, interested in the same subjects as herself, he met her on equal terms, read her compositions, lent her books, and was understood to have so far risen superior to the prejudices of class and race as to express his regret to her father that his son and heir—a boy of seventeen—was not of an age to marry her. It is certain that he begged her to write an anonymous letter of advice and remonstrance to the lad, whose disposition and tastes were causing anxiety—a request to which Manon responded by sending an epistle still extant.

The intimacy lasted only over eighteen months, and Boismorel's death from sunstroke caused Manon real grief. She was a woman who, at every stage of her career, thought much of friendship, and those to whom she was thus linked were many, although, with the exception of the Cannet sisters and, later, Madame Grandchamp, scarcely a woman is to be found amongst them. Public interests, in the stirring times that followed, did not, in her case, supersede or exclude private ones. Patriotism, in her own words, generalised and lifted the affections on to a higher plane; friendship embellished and rendered them perfect. She was, in fact, a woman before she was a politician. To the list of her friends was now to be added the man who ultimately claimed and obtained a gift greater than friendship, and by whose means the whole tenor of her life was changed. Had she not married Roland, would she have been content to remain a spectator of the great drama that was to be enacted? It is impossible to say. But it should be remembered that she is not to be confounded with the women who sought and invited personal notoriety; and that it was through her husband alone that she was swept into the current of public life.

M. Roland de la Platière was, at the time he made Manon's acquaintance, forty-two years of age, and



occupied the position of an inspector of commerce. At Amiens, where his work lay, he had become known to the Cannet family; there, it also appears, he had won the heart of Henriette, the elder of the two sisters, whose affection he did not return. Belonging to an old and well-connected family, his parents had fallen on evil days, and, compelled to quit the Château of Thizy, near Villefranche, where he was born, had retired to the Clos de la Platière, of which he subsequently assumed the name. Not destitute of a certain ambition and a desire to vindicate the claims represented by his birth as well as by many years of diligence in the public service, he drew up, after his marriage, a memorandum setting forth his origin and position, with the object of obtaining letters of *noblesse*. This document—combining, as M. Join-Lambert has pointed out, homage rendered to the social hierarchy in which he sought advancement with sentiments dictated by the philosophy of his age and environment—failed to obtain what he desired, and was afterwards made a subject of reproach by his enemies.

Roland's life, from boyhood upward, had been spent in hard work. At Rouen he had filled for ten years an office in the body of inspectors of manufactures. From Normandy he had been transferred to Languedoc and Picardy, and in 1776 was doing his best to carry out Turgot's industrial reforms. Conscientious and laborious, he fulfilled his duties to the uttermost, numberless reports upon the results of investigation carried on both in France and over the greater part of Europe bearing witness to his industry. The value of his services had been recognised and appreciated and he was a not unsuccessful man.

But he was more than a mere government official. He had thought and read much, and if not altogether meriting the title of philosopher—to which Manon wa

inclined at first to dispute his claim—he was a scholar and a *savant*.

As to the impression he produced upon his new acquaintance, three sources of information are available—namely, her letters to Sophie Cannet, to whom he owed his introduction; those afterwards addressed by her to Roland himself; and her memoirs, written after many years. It is perhaps not unnatural that these authorities are not wholly in accord. Sixteen years of the close association of married life were likely not only to have modified Madame Roland's earlier verdict, but to have obscured her recollection of her husband as she had seen him first; nor is there any just cause to charge her with a deliberate colouring of facts if her accounts do not always tally. It is difficult at all times to bid dry bones to live, and in her case the difficulty was enhanced by the fact that, when her memoirs were written, the heart of the writer was filled by a different image. The woman who loved Buzot found it hard to believe that she had ever given her heart to Roland.

Of Roland as he was a few years later, a portrait then taken gives an idea. It represents a man not otherwise than good-looking, and who had not yet wholly lost the appearance of youth. Carefully dressed in the fashion of the day and with no sign of the Quaker-like costume he afterwards affected, his features are regular, the nose aquiline, the eyebrows well defined, and the eyes dark. If the face may be a trifle wooden and lacking in animation, it is not unpleasing. Henriette Cannet's unrequited affection would also seem to point to some degree of personal attraction.

That Sophie had long desired to make M. Roland and her friend acquainted appears to indicate that she had no quarrel with him on her sister's account. It was not, however, till the January of 1776 that he presented himself at the quai de l'Horloge, bringing a letter of

introduction in which he was described as an enlightened philosopher of blameless character, his sole defects being an excessive admiration for the ancients at the expense of men of more modern days and too great a disposition to talk of himself.

What Manon saw on this first meeting was a tall, middle-aged man, moving with the stiffness belonging to a sedentary life, whose manners were marked by simplicity and ease, and who combined the courtesy natural to good birth combined with the gravity of a philosopher.

Such was the guest of whose visit Manon hastened to give Sophie an account. It had not been a complete success, and she feared she had not shown to advantage. At a dinner shortly before—Roland, alas ! had not been present at it—it had been a different matter. On that occasion she felt that she had shone. A sponge must be, however, passed over the small regrets of her vanity. For the rest, she had received her new acquaintance in her *baigneuse*, her white camisole, and the *négligé* Sophie had thought becoming in the summer. Raynal, Rousseau, Voltaire, Switzerland, and the Government had all been, though superficially, discussed. M. Roland must have seen that she was charmed by his visit, and had asked permission to repeat it.

When he did so, in a week or two, the conditions were unfavourable. Manon had a bad cold ; her father, after an inconvenient custom he had adopted, quitting his business in the workshop, came to sit by, unable to join in the conversation and manifestly impatient. Under these circumstances literature was only coldly dealt with, and Manon, who preferred the discussion of philosophy, with the questions arising out of it, to pure scholarship, found the talk dull.

M. Roland nevertheless introduced a new and welcome element into her life. The acquisition of a new friend,



or of an acquaintance who might develop into one, was always a matter of importance, even though a love-affair might be in progress. At this date, however, there was no indication of the part he was to play, and she was at least equally interested in others. A M. de Sainte-Lette occupied her much—an elderly man lately admitted to an intimate footing and a true philosopher, compared with whom Roland was nothing but a *savant*. The latter also incurred her displeasure by his sharp strictures of the Abbé Raynal, then one of her oracles. In the eyes of the inspector of commerce the Abbé's performance was neither pure history nor philosophic history, but simple romance—a feminine piece of work, “bon pour les toilettes.” Buffon, another object of her admiration, was pronounced to be a mere charlatan with a pretty style. It was no wonder that Manon felt vexation; and though shaken in her own estimates, she had not gratified the critic by showing it.

In May an advance was made. Manon confessed that she had learnt to appreciate Roland; was charmed by the solidity of his judgment, his agreeable talk, and the variety of his information. Six weeks afterwards she had been dreaming of him, and was wondering why no news of him had reached her.

During that month of May when Manon Phlipon was learning to know Roland better and the first links of the chain destined to involve her in his doom were being forged, Paris had been startled by the news that Turgot—the man upon whom hopes of the amelioration of the condition of the starving people chiefly hung—had been dismissed from his post of Comptroller-General. Though the fair anticipations greeting the beginning of the reign had been overcast, the blow was unexpected by those to whom a new era had seemed to be opening. Not more than a few weeks earlier the young King and his minister had appeared in full

concord, and Louis had written to him the well-known words, "*Il n'y a que vous et moi qui aimions le peuple.*" But Turgot was not a man to be content with phrases. He was ready to translate theories into action, and on his proposal to tax clergy, noblesse and Parlement followed his fall.

Whether his methods were wise or unwise cannot be discussed here, nor the further question whether substantial success, at the stage of financial stress which had been reached, was possible to any man or any method. What was certain was that, as reformers almost invariably do, he had rendered himself unpopular with every party in the State—the people, the Parlement, the wealthy, and, not least, the Queen. Marie Antoinette probably hastened his fall—she had gone so far as to hint, in connection with him, at the Bastille.

Unpopular as he was, his dismissal raised a storm. The Sunday when it became known in Paris was, Manon wrote, a day of revolution. The words were truer than she knew. It is curious to reflect how little those who were to be the chief actors in the approaching drama—men and women converging already from all quarters to a common centre—suspected the direction in which their destiny was bearing them. The ideas that gave birth to the Revolution were to be found in every section of society and of the nation; the language in which they were clothed was on every lip. The philosophy of the salons, to use Lamartine's words, was to become the revolt of the streets. Men sitting in their libraries or discussing theories were putting a match to a powder-magazine when they imagined that they were lighting a lamp.

With Manon, as with many of her associates, sympathy with mankind was so far chiefly an abstract sentiment. For the sufferings of humanity at large her heart might bleed; it was only occasionally, when

brought face to face with him, that the Lazarus at her gate caused her a real pang. The charity driving men and women into highways and byways to rescue individuals, body and soul, had not yet become a motive power.

During the weeks that she was gradually establishing relations with Roland she had, after her fashion, reviewed her present condition and settled on the course to be pursued. At the risk of repetition it is necessary to recur to her habits of introspection in order to explain the running commentary upon her life and character she never failed to keep up. Still under the dominion of her infatuation for La Blancherie—some months were to pass before she finally emancipated herself from its influence—she nevertheless determined to turn her thoughts into another direction. Study, to be carried on as before, was to become less aimless and desultory. "I am made to turn it to good use. It is the sole career open to me, and I long to throw myself into it. Overmuch variety hinders progress. It is time to choose a method and to adopt a line." Renouncing the idea of making a profession of society or of gaining a reputation for brilliance, she desired to nourish the heart by the cultivation of the mind. Yet how to do this unaided? She was *ennuyée* at being a woman—it is a frequent complaint—a different sex, a different century, would have suited her better. The barriers of opinion, the fetters of prejudice, met her on every side, and her strength was vainly wasted in shaking her chains. "O Liberty, ideal of strenuous souls, nourishment of virtue, for me you are nothing but a name. What good is served by my enthusiasm for the public weal, since I can profit it in nothing?" The vehement lament links its writer to the woman she was to become.

Her admiration for Rousseau continued unabated, and to the February of this year belongs an unsuccessful



attempt she hazarded to obtain a personal interview with her idol and apostle. A countryman of his—a republican philosopher—having business to transact with him, had offered to devolve the privilege of seeing and speaking with the prophet upon Manon, and on the pretext of obtaining a personal reply to a letter she repaired to the house in the rue Platière where Rousseau lodged. The visit ended in disappointment. The door was opened by an elderly woman of austere aspect, who, standing with her hand on the lock, barred the entrance. Her husband, she explained, could speak to no one. As to the request that had been made him, it was impossible for him to accede to it. His age needed rest.

Admittance was plainly not to be obtained, and begging that her homage might be presented to the man in the world she most revered, Manon had no choice but to withdraw discomfited ; though not, as it seems from a subsequent letter, without hopes of achieving her object by other means.

If she was finding a new pleasure in M. Roland's society—pleasure, so far, untouched by sentiment—she stood in need of it. Though her letters to Sophie and to the elder sister, Henriette, more recently admitted to her intimacy, show little diminution of the old enthusiastic affection, some sort of obstacle to a full and free exchange of confidence must have been interposed by the fact that Sophie—far from following her friend's lead—maintained her original attitude towards religion and entertained for a time thoughts of a conventual life. The premature death of M. de Boismorel in the autumn deprived Manon, further, of an associate who had played an important part during the past eighteen months ; whilst domestic affairs were causing her increasing anxiety.

M. Phlipon's business was suffering more and more from neglect ; Manon's fortune, such as it was, was in

danger of being dissipated ; and, unwilling to approach her father personally on the subject, she was practical enough to desire that her interests should be, if possible, safeguarded. Phlipon's private conduct, torn between affection for his daughter, reluctance to present her with a stepmother, and other tendencies, also left much to be desired ; and an element of unrest and uncertainty was introduced into an existence already sufficiently uncongenial to a woman who was, intellectually and socially, rapidly rising above it.

In Manon's manner of facing the situation and her steady determination not to seek safety and material comfort in the obvious remedy offered by a marriage of convenience she is seen at her best. If necessary, she said, she could work, and it was well to be prepared for an emergency, "whereas a chain forged through interest is in my opinion the worst ill I could suffer. . . . I can say that I fear nothing, since I await misfortune and make ready for labour. I know very well that neither can prevent me from being happy." A declaration of the affection she still feels for the father who so ill deserved it follows. He was only what other men in his circumstances would become. "I love him, pity him, weep for him, excuse him. I hope, and I console myself."

Her friends, and Roland amongst them, were a chief source of consolation. If M. de Sainte-Lette was her most constant companion—she saw him three or four times a week—she classed him and M. Roland together as the men who spoilt her for the society of others, men rare in their species, and with whom it would be hard to find any others to bear comparison.

That autumn Roland left France for the purpose of resuming his travels ; a parting taking place, when, in the presence of Sainte-Lette, he asked, not in vain, permission to kiss Manon.

"You are happy in leaving," Sainte-Lette told him, looking benevolently on from the height of his sixty years. "Hasten back, that you may demand as much once more."

Roland did not hasten back. Over a year was to go by before the two met again, a love-affair at Leghorn seeming to prove that the traveller had left Paris heart-whole. His confidence in Manon was nevertheless proved by the fact that he confided his manuscripts to her care, in case evil should befall him in foreign lands. The notes he made abroad—afterwards printed in the form of letters—were likewise transmitted to her through his brother.

A letter to Henriette Cannet gives an indication of Manon's sentiments. She missed M. Roland less than she might otherwise have done, owing to recent cares — doubtless her father's misconduct — and her many occupations, so she told her correspondent. But whilst these causes may have contributed to lessen her regret for an absent friend, they were supplemented by the acquirement of a new one in the person of a man who came near to exercising an important influence on her future. M. de Sainte-Lette possessed "another self" in the person of one M. de Sévelinges. This gentleman, whose home was at Soissons, having recently lost his wife, Sainte-Lette, to distract him from his grief, presently brought to Paris and to the quai de l'Horloge, where Manon, pitiful and touched by his silent sorrow, was prepared in no long time to extend to him a part of the affection she bestowed on Sainte-Lette. Her description of a day spent in the company of both places the trio graphically before us.

Having taken her two friends to visit her uncle the priest, promoted to be Canon of Vincennes, and with whom she was now on the old affectionate terms, the three were returning to Paris on foot, when, as they



were walking home by moonlight, another wayfarer was passed. "An author, a poet, or a madman," he was declaiming, as he pursued his solitary way, Racine's *Andromaque* aloud.

Resisting at first an inclination to give way to laughter, words caught by the three companions put a sudden end to their mirth. Orestes was making his appeal to Pylades :

"Excuse un malheureux qui perd tout ce qu'il aime."

"The words were hardly pronounced when I saw M. de Sainte-Lette's friend give him his hand, trembling, whilst, in moved and sorrowful accents, he repeated the line. My eyes were wet with tears. We all three sighed, and silence reigned amongst us."

M. de Sainte-Lette was on the eve of a voyage to India, and did not long survive it. He left his friend as a legacy to Manon, and *le gentilhomme malheureux* in some sort filled his place. At one moment, indeed, it seemed he was destined to do more, and it may be well to trace here the course of the connection between Manon and her bereaved acquaintance. Indicated more lightly in her memoirs, it is described at length in her correspondence with Sophie.

Roland in Italy, Sainte-Lette in India, Boismorel dead, La Blancherie finally discredited, and family affairs unsatisfactory, a fresh object of interest was specially welcome. Sévelinges, aged fifty-five, of old family—Manon was not indifferent to such advantages—with, clinging to him, the glamour of a great sorrow and a need of sympathy, possessed of that gentle philosophy and melancholy sensibility for which Manon admitted she had always entertained a strong liking, and with tastes corresponding to hers, was well adapted to supply that object. A correspondence was accordingly started and kept up. He read and approved her compositions,

ranking them higher than she had hoped, and sending her one of his own in return. Affection, if not intimacy, was the result, and in February 1777 Sévelinges hazarded, in language so obscure that she at first misunderstood it, a singular proposal. With small means, and with two sons whose fortunes would be damaged should he have children by a second marriage, he nevertheless desired to secure the companionship of a woman for whom he had a genuine regard, and the possibility of an arrangement by which he would be enabled to enjoy it without detriment to his family occurred to his mind. Why should not Manon take his name, and place him in permanent possession of a sister and friend? This was the suggestion, to which her reply, though not given without much hesitation and searching of heart, was not unfavourable.

Why the plan was not carried into effect remains uncertain. Possibly M. de Sévelinges perceived drawbacks to its realisation he had at first overlooked; possibly—as it afterwards appeared he wished it to be believed—he had never really contemplated the arrangement, and his ambiguous language had been misinterpreted. In any case, nothing further came of it, and in September of the same year Manon was writing to Sophie in a tone of complete indifference that her correspondence with Sévelinges was likely to slacken or even cease. It is a curious coincidence that this letter was dated only two days later than the first she addressed to M. Roland after his return to France.

Meantime life had been carried on after its usual fashion. Household duties, the business connected with her small fortune, now rapidly disappearing, the ever-recurrent questions of marriage, treated by Manon in her customary sensible and matter-of-fact manner, had filled her days and occupied her mind; varied by visits to her uncle at Vincennes, where the apartments at the Castle

were allotted, after the manner of Hampton Court, to lodgers who possessed a claim upon the royal favour, and who made up a little society to which the Canon's niece was a welcome addition. Upon this somewhat cheerless routine broke the return of M. Roland to France.



## CHAPTER VII

Roland's return to France—Development of his relations with Manon—Voltaire in Paris—Manon and the Cannets—Roland in love—Difficulties—Correspondence—The engagement suspended.

ROLAND had left for Italy in the autumn of 1776, and had remained absent from France close upon a year. During this interval it does not appear that, in the matter of keeping up communications with Manon Phlipon, he had done more than cause the notes of his journeys to reach her. In September 1777, however, a letter, dated from Villefranche, where he had rejoined his family, contained apologies for having left a charming little note from her unanswered. Finding him at Rome, various causes had combined to prevent him from replying. Amongst them was a reluctance to make her a sharer in his cares and troubles. A death had occurred which he would long carry in his heart—a phrase understood to be connected, literally or metaphorically, with the unfortunate love-affair at Leghorn. He counted upon her friendship to alleviate his sorrow. The brigands and dangers at sea she had feared on his behalf held no terrors for him. Friends alone had presented an obstacle to self-destruction, and amongst them she had no reason to complain of the place assigned her.

Manon answered with effusion and reproaches. Was it possible that, caring to be remembered, he had been so tardy in recalling himself to her memory? Was this due to confidence in her, or to forgetfulness? His letter had

cost her tears, yet it had made her happy. She had pictured him a contented wanderer, whilst she had been surrounded by troubles and vexations. How mistaken had she been ! Only the day before she had told Sophie that she made use of life with indifference and would lose it without regret—words escaping her in a moment of suffering. She now felt that friendship caused her to change her language.

Such was the initiation of the renewal of intercourse between the man and woman who, two years and a half later, were to marry. In his masterly introduction to their pre-nuptial correspondence,<sup>1</sup> M. Join-Lambert has supplied an admirable commentary on the gradual development of the situation. The letters he publishes afford a curious corrective to the view of the affair afterwards taken by one of the correspondents.

“On M. Roland's return,” wrote his wife in her memoirs, “I found a friend. His seriousness, his manners, his habits, all dedicated to work, led me to consider him, so to speak, as without sex, or as a philosopher existing by reason alone. A species of confidence sprang up between us ; and through the pleasure he found in my society he gradually contracted the need of coming more frequently. It was nearly five years after our first acquaintance before he made any declaration of tender sentiments. I was not insensible to them, feeling more esteem for him than for any one I had hitherto known ; but I had perceived that he himself was not regardless, personally, or for family reasons, of external circumstances. I told him frankly that I was honoured by his proposals and would respond to them with pleasure ; that I did not, however, consider myself a good match for him, and I unfolded to him without reserve the condition of the business. It was ruined.”

It will be seen that this account of the earlier stages

<sup>1</sup> *Mariage de Madame Roland*, A. Join-Lambert.

of the affair is far from presenting a perfect correspondence with the facts as represented in the letters. The question to be asked is whether the tone of the letters is to be accepted as an index to the condition of the writer's mind and heart at the time, or whether it must be concluded that, desiring to secure as a husband a man she honoured and respected, Marie Jeanne Phlipon was led to make use of language that implied a degree of affection she did not feel.

Turning to Roland, it is difficult, reading his impassioned phrases, to believe that the woman to whom they were addressed can have regarded him as *sans sexe*. Whether or not he desired, at all the stages of the long-drawn-out affair, to marry her, it cannot be doubted that he was genuinely in love—as he had been in love with the Italian widow at Leghorn and, possibly, with Henriette Cannel. It must further be repeated that the mist of years, the mist also of a new and engrossing passion, obscured Madame Roland's vision at the time her memoirs were written, and that, whatever conclusion is arrived at, she may have been guiltless of a deliberate colouring of facts.

It is unnecessary to linger over the months following upon Roland's return to France. Manon's private life was marked by no events of importance. Marriages were suggested and weighed by her with practical common sense, and were declined; the family fortunes, sinking lower and lower, continued to supply her with a cause of disquietude and unrest. Her father's manner of life was likewise a source of distress to the daughter who, in spite of the dissimilarity of their tastes and characters, never ceased to feel a certain affection for him so long as she remained under his roof.

Whilst abstract questions were eagerly studied by her, it is noticeable that she remained curiously untouched by public events, or by history in the concrete. Ex-



citing as were American affairs, she confessed that she knew little of them, the world in which she lived being so destitute of knowledge or intelligence that to her Paris counted for little more than the provinces. She was *un peu fâchée* when England seemed destined to subdue the rebels, and declared that she watched the revolution across the Atlantic with interest and recognised its importance, desiring that America should vindicate its right to liberty. But it is clear that political changes, at home or abroad, mattered little to her at this time. On one of the rare occasions upon which she alluded to politics in her letters, it was to say that the best course, in her opinion, was to maintain a stationary attitude, since otherwise worse might supervene, and she anticipated no improvement. She was above all things a student, affected but slightly by what went on around her : "I have my breviary—my excellent Jean-Jacques. When I can permanently add [to my library] Plutarch and Montaigne, these three excellent guides will make up my daily company."

They did not, nevertheless, content her. In the letter to Sophie she had quoted in her answer to Roland's—written no doubt in a mood of melancholy and discouragement—the hardihood and spirit she commonly displayed in meeting the mischances of life appeared to have failed her, and, analysing as usual the dejection by which she was overcome, she described its symptoms to her friend : "The magnificent spectacle of the universe seems covered by a veil ; a sort of mist surrounds and confuses the objects I desire to fix my gaze upon. Sensation is languid ; my ideas succeed one another coldly ; I live without passions or tastes. I am becoming a stranger to enthusiasm, to compassion. The unhappy will receive my care and my support, but I shall remain unmoved. . . . I am only twenty-three ; already the sweetest illusions have perished, even before

I had tasted all their charm. . . . To live in peace and forgotten, and to die in silence—this would be my desire, had I the courage to form one.”

Rousseau, Plutarch, and Montaigne had not sufficed to raise her to the true philosophical level. In Voltaire she took little interest, regarding with something like contemptuous disapproval the ovation the old man received when, in the February of 1778, he visited Paris. “Sneering Paris,” says Carlyle, “has suddenly grown reverent; devotional with hero-worship.” Nobles and fine ladies vied with each other in doing him honour; crowds followed him in the streets. The city—always craving for a new sensation—was swept off its feet by enthusiasm. But Marie Phlipon looked coldly on. As a poet, a man of taste and intelligence, she allowed him to be worthy of admiration. As politician and philosopher, she rated his claims to authority low. He had better have enjoyed his renown in quiet at Ferney than have come to Paris to exhibit to the world the absurdities of an old man eager for incense.

In the consideration of her future she had ample cause for preoccupation. M. de Sévelinges was still, in the spring of 1778, attempting to reconcile his need for some measure of her society and friendship with the duty he conceived himself to owe to his sons. Receding, nevertheless, from the position he had taken up a year earlier, he was delicately insinuating that Mademoiselle Phlipon had misunderstood his proposals when she had imagined that they included the offer of his hand; and Manor somewhat tardily discerned a *louche* and uncertain tone in his communications.

Disappointed in Sévelinges and the ideal she had formed of his character, the summer of 1778 also marked the first serious change in the intimate and confidential terms existing for more than eleven years between Manor and the Cannet sisters. For this Roland was responsible



M. ROLAND DE LA PLATIÈRE.  
From an engraving by Ligbert.



MADAME ROLAND.  
From an engraving by M. F. Dien.





It would appear that the anticipated meeting between Manon and the returned traveller had not taken place at once, his journey to Paris having been postponed by illness. The date of their meeting is left uncertain ; but in March she describes a visit—it can scarcely have been the first—he had paid to the quai de l'Horloge.

“I received some days ago a visit from M. Roland de la Platière,” she wrote. “He was grave ; I was *rêveuse* ; we talked of life's sorrows, of the griefs continually assailing *âmes sensibles*” ; and she begged her friends, should the conversation turn upon her, never to let him hear anything to her father's disadvantage. In May another mention of him occurs—to which a letter to be presently quoted gives the commentary. “I only very rarely receive visits from M. R. de la P. He seems one of the busy men who do not give themselves to all the world. You may think it strange that, loving painting, I have not exercised it in making his portrait. I do not see him often enough to hope to catch the likeness . . . he is, as far as I am concerned, at the end of so long a telescope that I might believe him to be still in Italy. I imagine, however, that he has not left this town.”

The letter—Manon is convicted out of her own lips—was written with the deliberate intention of conveying a false impression. Roland, often at Amiens, was, for private reasons, keenly anxious that his intercourse with their friend should remain unknown to the Cannet sisters. It might seem singular that Manon, priding herself upon a high standard of sincerity, should have agreed to carry out his wishes and to enter upon a course of dissimulation. It is less surprising when it is remembered that she had, for years and upon principle, made a practice of deception with regard to religion, with the object of avoiding giving pain or scandal to others. She now felt apparently no scruple in deceiving, for the sake of a man who did not as yet occupy the position of a lover, the

friends she cared for most in the world ; and was probably convinced that in doing so she was right.

"I have never erred except by force of reasoning," she wrote to Roland some months later, pursuing her habit of self-dissection. "Of all that I have done or said under different circumstances, what needed correction has not been least the result of reflection. . . . The only thing contributing to my peace of mind, or at least to the softening of my regrets, is my natural mania for arranging my intentions on so good a basis that I suffer no self-reproach on their account."

If, in the matter of her dealings with the Cannets, she had settled the affair satisfactorily with her conscience, the situation presented undeniable difficulties, accentuated by the fact that in June Sophie was paying a visit to Paris. Even in the joy of reunion something of disappointment mingled. Sophie was undemonstrative, and Manon almost suspected her of a desire that she should love her less. In religion the divergence of views was increasingly marked. Yet Manon asserted in a letter to Henriette that the intimacy in no way suffered. Each, she said, equally upright in intention, frank in thought, and candid in speech, unveiled her mind and opened her heart without constraint or reserve.

After this, it is somewhat of a shock to read a letter addressed to M. Roland in August. Sophie, still in Paris, had invited Manon and her father to meet their common friend at dinner ; and Manon thought it well to warn her fellow-guest beforehand of what he was to expect. She was afraid lest one of those nothings might escape M. Phlipon which would serve to betray to the hostess the little dissimulation she had practised. "To avoid many pretences, I had hastened to make a single one . . . saying that I had seen little of you. . . . You have established a measure of reserve in the midst of the greatest confidence. My simplicity and *bonhomie*



have taken fright at the embarrassment that might arise from forgetfulness or from want of aptitude for these *finesses*." She did not reproach him. He had judged silence to be needful for reasons she had never doubted. But she felt it necessary to write to him on this subject. "To you alone can I complain of the change of which I was aware in the pleasure of meeting you at my friend's house, and the opposition I therefore offered to her arrangements."

In October Sophie left Paris, and though her presence had been an embarrassment, a letter Manon addressed to her betrays no weakening of the old affection. Self-upbraiding may indeed have dictated the ardent language. "Your departure," she wrote lamentably, "tore my soul from me. The earth seemed to give way beneath my feet; I appeared to fall, forsaken, into a new universe, surrounded on every side by silence and night and where I was becoming stupefied or mad."

Roland had also returned to Amiens, and by a letter written to Manon in December it appears that outward formality continued to be observed. He had seen little of the Cannets and was working harder than ever before. One of Manon's friends, doubtless Henriette, was in a disquieting condition and in fear of death. Confused, broken, and enigmatical phrases follow, referring apparently to the share he may be supposed to have had in her present state. "But you know . . . and though I presume indeed that this has nothing to do with it, yet . . ." then breaking into Italian . . . "the afflicted brother said something showing that he still thought of it, and she knew well that . . . nothing, nothing, nothing."

Roland was plainly disturbed. Manon, for her part, replied that she was grieved to hear of Henriette's sad condition, and saw with sorrow that her sensibility was perhaps hollowing out a grave for her.

During the winter of 1778-9 the friendship grew and prospered, but was nothing more. Nor was it until the spring of 1779—when the acquaintanceship was three years old—that a fresh element was introduced. From this time it is clear that Manon's desire and intention was—could she compass it—to become Roland's wife.

The inauguration of this phase is indicated by a letter from her, following upon an interview wherein he had assumed the attitude of a lover. She finds herself in a new situation, so she tells him, not without its sweetness, but a sweetness counterbalanced by agitation and disquiet. She is dissatisfied with herself, and he is the cause. Let him not show her that trouble, fear and danger are almost inseparable from the most sacred friendship between a man and a woman. "It seems to me," she concludes, in Italian, "that friendship is less ardent in its caresses, is very gentle, natural, and candid. I no longer recognised it, and my heart took fright. Why give birth to trouble and disquiet in my simple soul? Leave me in peace to love you always—always."

Roland's reply should have been easy, but he was not apparently at the moment prepared to make it. He read her letter with tears, pleaded his sense of her worth to justify his madness; reproached her with the evenness of mind which could preserve an impartial view, and with the security and firmness which, praiseworthy as they were, tore his heart. In impassioned sentences he offered her the heart that was already hers—but made no mention of marriage.

In her reply Manon showed herself mistress of the situation; nor can her letter be better described than by quoting M. Join-Lambert's summary of it.

"It is the finest programme a woman could form and dream of realising. She gives a résumé of her life, the history of her opinions and of her sentiments.

She has vibrated under the influence of a passion by which the most inert nature is stirred. The passing disturbance of the senses has not reached her head. The opportunity presents itself of taking up a position and striking a blow, of expressing once for all *what she is—what she will always remain*. *I may be the victim of sentiment, but I will never be any man's plaything*. Roland is warned. He will speak of marriage or she will see him no more. The confession of faith is superbly alluring. Its language, always elevated and wide, is here accurate, almost perfect. . . . The style proves that Marie Phlipon has read and re-read the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, that Julie is her model, almost to the point of weakness. She knows that to lower her weapons would be not kindness but imprudence. . . . Playing a bold game, Marie Phlipon ends by this *mise en demeure*, 'Restore your friendship to me, or fear . . . to compel me to see you no more.'"<sup>1</sup>

The interchange of letters after this crisis was rapid—now couched in formal terms, now abandoning the *vous* for the *tu* of familiar intimacy. Yet, in spite of the language of passion, of asseverations of devotion on one side and on the other, the correspondence had some of the features of a fencing match. Vehemently disclaiming any sentiments calculated to offend, Roland nevertheless refrained from unfolding any definite plan; whilst Manon's letters, at times seeming to dissuade him from a disadvantageous connection, at times confessing that the obstacles she raises are meant to be surmounted, are admirably adapted to tighten her hold upon a man who loves her. A few sentences, taken almost at random, give the key to her attitude. "Spare me," she writes, "the cruel and delightful emotions which follow upon delirium and the forgetfulness of wise reserve. . . . I am familiar with struggles, I may dare to say with

<sup>1</sup> *Le Mariage de Madame Roland*, A. Join-Lambert, Int. I, li.



victories. Do not rob me of the last and render me incapable of keeping up the first. . . . I have not enough of your philosophy . . . to surrender myself to the domination of a passion which would become, in me, transport and madness."

Of the condition of her fortunes she had given a candid account. Fourteen thousand francs alone remained of her inheritance, and out of this pittance it had been arranged that she was to pay her father for her board, besides, by filling the place of a maidservant, enabling him to economise in wages. The situation was further complicated by the suit of Phlipon's sole remaining pupil, whose addresses were favoured by her family.

Manon deserved the more credit for her candour, because, genuinely in love as Roland was, he was by no means indifferent to the worldly disadvantages of the match, remaining acutely sensible of them throughout the whole course of his love-making. He never forgot that he was marrying below him. On the other hand, his position and social standing may have strengthened Manon's desire to become his wife. "He would impart to her existence honour, influence, reputation, perhaps glory. Would he suffice to give her happiness? It is a delicate question. In speaking of love to him, does she deceive him? She does not lie; for she feels a great need of tenderness, of bestowing much happiness, of receiving a little. She will pay her debt." Such is M. Join-Lambert's inconclusive reply to the question he raises.

Meantime, whatever might have been his misgivings when first he had yielded to her charm, Roland had become ready and anxious to marry her. Though in his letters impatience and disapproval might alternate with expressions of passionate devotion, he plainly looked forward to a future to be spent together and a common home to be inhabited at no distant date. His injunction

of secrecy continued nevertheless in full force. Neither Phlipon, the Roland family, nor the Cannets were to be given a hint of the position of affairs. The motive of so much mystery is difficult to fathom, since a man of honour, such as Roland, can scarcely have desired to keep a way of retreat open. Manon, however, had no choice but to yield; and she pledged herself to take all necessary precautions.

In thus obeying his will she may have been wise; in other respects she was less so. Domestic cares, pressing ever more heavily upon her, no doubt threw the future she hoped to share with Roland into the brighter relief; but to dwell upon them in her letters, constantly and minutely, was not a method of rendering that future secure. She had done what was honourable and upright in disclosing at length the condition of her father's affairs, in attempting no concealment as to his unsatisfactory character and habits, or the ruin that had overtaken her financial prospects. To continue to pour out day after day, in wearisome detail, interminable accounts of sordid vexations resulting from Phlipon's conduct, was to keep her disabilities perpetually before the eyes of the man she hoped to marry. Again, if she may have considered it due to her future husband to acquaint him with the difficulties she encountered in dealing with the passion conceived for her by her father's apprentice—usually alluded to as "*le jeune homme*"—to fill pages with descriptions of the young lover's maladies (she had nursed him through an attack of measles), of his accessions of despair, his contemplated suicide, and the vengeance he had vowed against his unknown rival, was once more to introduce a distasteful topic into her communications. Further, if it was unpleasant for a man of Roland's stamp, position, and age to be constantly reminded that the woman he hoped to make his wife was persecuted by the addresses of a love-sick shopboy,



it was not less so to learn—again Manon's diffuse candour trenches upon folly—that she had listened not unfavourably to proposals from a suitor of his own standing which were in Roland's eyes little less than insulting. The episode of her relations with Sévelinges—who had not yet abandoned the attempt to keep up his intercourse with her—was indeed visited by the inspector of commerce with a violence of condemnation meekly endorsed by the culprit.

The affair would in any case have required careful and delicate treatment. If love was to triumph, the victory would not be an easy one, and the way to secure it must have cost Manon many anxious hours. Roland, irritable, overworked, tenacious of his dignity, over-conscious of social superiority, had yielded to her charm so far as to overlook the disadvantages of her birth and of a father shifty, needy, and of indifferent reputation and morals ; but a false step might be fatal, and it behoved her to move cautiously.

In July she took the decided measure of making her father acquainted with the understanding existing between herself and Roland. If M. Join-Lambert is justified in believing that there was an element of strategy in the act, and that the communication was made in order to clench the matter of her marriage, no trace of any doubt as to the view Roland was likely to take of it was allowed to appear in her announcement of the fact.

"Kiss my letter," she wrote, "tremble with joy ; my father is pleased ; he esteems you ; he loves me ; we shall all be happy" ; and she related with apparent rapture the manner of the disclosure.

It would have been difficult for Roland to show displeasure ; he must have been aware that he had no right to insist upon the matter being kept from Phlipon's ears ; and if the tone of his response did not wholly correspond to that of Manon's announcement, he accepted



it with a good grace. Yet before long he was writing to her after a fashion she might well have resented. Comparing her and Robespierre, Michelet points out that they had one defect in common—each was *né scribe*. If Manon was an accomplished letter-writer, she was so voluminous a one that the perusal of her closely written pages was a tax upon the leisure of a busy man, and may possibly have contributed to produce the impatience that sometimes found vent in his replies.

“How you pass from one thing to another, physically and morally!” he wrote. “I own that I could not go from one extreme to the other with equal rapidity, the rather because, as you rightly say, it is all accompanied by ample dissertations upon cause and effect, means and results, the probable and the certain, good and evil, the beautiful and the ugly, cold and heat, greatness and littleness, etc., and with periods not only squared, but with many faces, rounded, pointed, long and short, etc.”

The passage serves to show that plain speech was not absent from Roland's wooing. Nor is it a solitary instance of language displaying not only irritation but a desire to bring home to Manon a sense of her faults and shortcomings. She continued, nevertheless, to overwhelm him with details of domestic troubles. Earlier in the summer she had watched devotedly by the death-bed of her old and faithful servant, Mignonne. Next she has to tell of the malady of a cousin's maid, to whom she had also ministered. Her father too was ill, and his symptoms were described to the unsympathetic Roland. Fearing injury to her health from constant strain, he considered it a personal hardship that he, who had reckoned upon obtaining comfort from her in his troubles, should find that she was subjected to constant agitation and was manifestly suffering from it.

A crisis was reached in September. Complications had arisen with regard to pecuniary matters; and Roland

declared hotly that he had already failed sufficiently in his duty to his family by the silence he had maintained on the subject of his relations with Manon without also placing their fortune at the mercy of a spendthrift like Phlipon. "Were I to die by reason of this act, I would seal it with my blood," he exclaimed somewhat grandiloquently.

In the letter from which the last quotation is taken Roland mentions that he is writing to M. Phlipon by the same post. It was only now that he had overcome his reluctance to take the definite step of suing to a man for whom his contempt was unmeasured for his daughter's hand; and considering the mood in which the demand was made, it is not to be wondered at if it was couched in terms that give some colour to the hypothesis that he intended to court a refusal. "My father," says Madame Roland, "thought the letter dry. He did not like M. Roland's stiffness; did not care to have as his son-in-law an austere man who assumed the attitude of a censor. He answered him with hardness and impertinence, and only showed me his letter when he had dispatched the reply. I wrote to M. Roland that the event had too well justified the fears I had entertained with regard to my father, that I would cause him no further vexation, and begged he would abandon his project."

It would seem that Roland did not reject the offer of his liberty. Indignant at the tone of Phlipon's response to his overtures, he told Manon plainly that her father's language revealed a spirit he had not before been acquainted with, and which horrified him. She was as dear to him as ever; he would give his life for her, and his greatest wish was to possess her love . . . "mais ton père, mon amie, ton père!" His family would be afflicted and might even be alienated. He had sent a copy of the offensive missive to his relations, in reparation of his former silence.

Manon's answer was marked by dignity and self-restraint. Recognising the difficulties of the position, she again implied that Roland was released by her father's conduct from his obligations towards her, and left him free, should he desire it, to go his way. Roland was in a difficulty. In spite of her formal acknowledgment that he was at liberty to withdraw, a man of honour could scarcely feel it easy to do so. Further, though curiously sensitive to the disapproval of his kinsfolk, he loved Manon. Distaste for his prospective father-in-law, however, carried the day, and the marriage, if not put out of sight, was indefinitely postponed.

Manon submitted. The Roland family, she agreed, could not be expected to condone her father's action, and she counselled her lover to relinquish the thought of a union. Her sentiments were made plain in a letter containing, some weeks later, the announcement of her determination to quit her home, and to take refuge in the convent where a year of her childhood had been spent. Recapitulating the recent course of events, she gave, not without a touch of bitterness, the reasons for her determination. "I decided upon our mutual renunciation. The step taken, the effort made, I looked around me shuddering. I turned back to the past, I forecast the future. I sought my vanished hopes, I found nothing but a terrible void and precipices at every step. I gazed at you; you were sad but firm. I hardly recognised the man who had loved me." Was it possible that two reasonable beings, certain of making each other happy, should suffer and part because an ill-tempered man had been pleased to commit a folly repented of in a couple of days? Reproaches followed. In showing Phlipon's letter to his family, had he not sought to obtain a weapon against his own heart? Still she loved him, alike proud of her love and despairing. But she had regained the mastery over herself, recognising



that, if her father's letter was the ostensible cause of separation, the way must have been prepared by a cooling of Roland's ardour, owing to absence and divers other causes. She had no complaint to make. Both had missed happiness ; friendship must make up for the ills each had occasioned the other.

Such was the formal and ostensible winding-up of the affair. It is impossible not to suspect that the writer knew it to be no more than suspended.

## CHAPTER VIII

The rue Neuve Sainte-Etienne—Offer of a post at court—Roland's indecision—His visit to the convent—And renewed proposals—Marriage.

MANON'S decision to retire to a lodging in the convent in the rue Neuve Sainte-Etienne was a not unwise one. Daily intercourse with the father guilty of the ruin of her prospects would have been difficult to carry on without friction, and the fact that she was living apart from a man he disliked and despised might be expected to be welcome to Roland. At all events, her purpose was fixed. On November 1 she wrote to communicate her determination to Sophie, having previously borrowed from her the sum necessary to carry it into effect.

Her conduct towards the faithful friend of many years is difficult wholly to excuse. Throughout the months occupied by the absorbing interest of her relations with Roland—introduced to her, be it remembered, by Sophie—his strict injunctions of secrecy had been observed to the point of duplicity. "She is your friend, benissimo," he wrote of Sophie, "but for nothing in the world would I have you unveil my secret to her." Manon, if reluctantly, had consented to keep silence, and the allusions to Roland that occur in her letters might have reference to a common acquaintance or, possibly, a friend, but nothing more. There can be no doubt that she was thereby placed in a false position.

The friendship, foolish and extravagant as it had been, was of long standing, sincere and genuine. When Manon was in money difficulties, Sophie had hastened to offer her assistance; Henriette, at a later date, was to give a more signal proof of her enduring affection; and Manon must have been aware that both had just cause of complaint. Roland, however, had insisted, and she had not only yielded him blind obedience, but after she was in the convent, and when Sophie had discovered part of the truth and had charged her with it, she continued to lie hardily and boldly. Admitting that Roland had frequented her father's house, any suggestion of intimacy was set aside. She regarded him as a friend for whom she had a great esteem; had received him as such, and would continue to do so, though doubtless less frequently than before. If she had omitted to give details as to his visits and conversation, it was owing to the same reason which had led her to avoid dwelling upon her domestic vexations. Depression had rendered her idle in the matter of letter-writing. It was thus that she opened her heart to the friend of her youth; and it says much for Sophie's placability that, when the facts became known, no permanent breach ensued.

Meantime, with the future uncertain before her, and deciding that the quai de l'Horloge had become for the present intolerable, Manon had entered upon the experiment she had resolved to try. In her memoirs she has given a brief account of the weeks spent under the roof of Les Dames de la Congrégation, of her frugal fare—"potatoes, rice, haricot beans cooked with salt and a little butter . . . supplied my kitchen"—of her weekly visits to her father's house, that she might carry away the linen that needed mending, and to her grandparents. "The rest of my time . . . I gave myself up to study, shut up under my roof of snow, as I called it, for I lodged



near the sky, and it was winter." Agathe, the lay sister who had loved her as a child, came evening after evening to spend half an hour in her company; and if she was melancholy, melancholy had its charms. "If I was not happy I possessed in myself what was necessary to produce happiness and could be proud of knowing how to dispense with what was lacking to me."

The term of her residence in the rue Neuve Sainte-Etienne was not destined to be prolonged. Manon cannot have expected that it would prove more than an interlude. If Roland had in some sort accepted his dismissal, he continued, to use her words, to write as a man who had not ceased to love her, and the end can scarcely have been uncertain. Her letters had caught nothing of the infection of the tranquillity of the cloister.

"I die to see you," she wrote, "and live only for that moment. I am intoxicated with the thought of belonging to you—you know if I love you. My friend, come to me."

Would Roland come? Or would he, in spite of his lover-like letters, in spite of the strong affection which was to prove more durable than hers, decide to consult his safety by remaining at a prudent distance? This was the question with which she was chiefly occupied during the earlier weeks of her retirement.

Another question had been raised. An alternative had presented itself in the shape of the offer of a place at court, procured through the interest of a woman with whom she was acquainted. It is curious to speculate upon the consequences had she accepted it as a solution of her present difficulties. Though she would have been truly an incongruous figure at Versailles, with her bitter scorn for the combination of power and incapacity, and her growing spirit of rebellion against inequality and injustice, a more intimate acquaintance

with those who were increasingly to incur her fierce contempt, and personal association with the woman who was unwittingly earning the hatred of the people, might have modified her opinion of the representatives of tyranny. Untempered dislike is difficult to preserve at close quarters for a woman as warm-hearted and generous as Manon. But the experiment was not tried. The offer, not without consideration, was declined.

The refusal was wise; the post would have suited Manon no better than she would have suited the post. In any case, it was not long before a more attractive prospect opened before her. By the middle of January Roland had yielded so far as to visit her at the convent. "Will you have the courage to pass through Paris without seeing me?" Manon had written in one of the missives of reproach, of passionate devotion mingled with recrimination, rapidly exchanged during the closing weeks of the year. Roland had not that courage; and though she herself places his first visit to the convent at the end of five or six months, she had in reality been there no more than some ten weeks when he came. The interview, if not at once, proved decisive. To Sophie Cannet, making casual mention of it, Manon might say that philosophy had been discussed *assez bonnement*, but Roland's letter, following upon this renewal of intercourse, was far from philosophic.

"Into what a condition have you thrown me!" he wrote. "Say, after this, that I do not love you. . . . I imagined the sight of you would alleviate all my ills; it has put the climax to them. . . . Explain me to myself. Render me less unhappy."

Manon's explanation must have been ready. Happiness, if it depended upon the possession of Marie Phlipon, was in Roland's hands, and he cannot have been ignorant of this; nor can she have failed to recognise the fact that he would not long consent to forgo

it. Her answer, however, was marked by a prudent reserve, the earlier violence of her grief being replaced by a tone of dignified resignation to what she affected to regard as his unalterable decree of separation. "To speak accurately," she wrote, "I am not unhappy—I no longer have the least pretension to happiness. Hope, fear, desire—all are dead in my heart. I make no complaints."

The victory was in truth won. Roland came again, made her an explicit offer of his hand, and through his brother—a Benedictine—pressed it on her acceptance. He was now plainly in earnest.

"Do not let us make monsters for the pleasure of fighting them," he wrote on January 20 in a letter which closes the correspondence. "I know at last, and know positively, that my family love me, and desire my happiness. . . . If you have confidence enough in me—if you have it in yourself—I shall see you on Friday. Cause me no more grief; you have had too much grief yourself. Adieu."

A week later she was writing to Sophie Cannet to inform her that the marriage contract had been signed and the banns were to be published on the following Sunday. "*Pénétrée intimement, sans être enivrée, étourdie, j'envisage ma destination d'un œil paisible et attendri.*" The cherished wife of a man she respected and loved, she would find her happiness in the inexpressible charm of contributing to his.

To Sophie it was natural that she should represent the affair in quiet and unexaggerated colours. The account given of it in her memoirs is equally destitute of enthusiasm. "I did not disguise from myself that a man of less than forty-five would not have waited for five months to make me change my mind, and I admit that this fact stripped my sentiments of illusion. I considered, on the other hand, that his persistence, very deliberate as it was, assured me that I was appreciated. . . . In truth, if marriage were, as I believed it to be, a strict tie, a union



in which the woman is commonly charged with the happiness of two individuals, was it not better to exert my faculties and my courage in this honourable task than in my present condition of isolation ? ”

This was the light in which Madame Roland, looking back, regarded the conclusion of what has been called her *roman vécu*. Her letters give a totally different impression, and the two accounts can scarcely be reconciled. Yet it must be repeated that too harsh a judgment might easily be passed upon her, and it is difficult to determine what was her condition of mind at this time. Her true spirit in entering on the marriage is probably to be found rather in her announcement of it to Sophie Cannet, than either in the coldness of her memoirs or the extravagance of her love-letters. Marie Phlipon had again and again shown that she refused to purchase comfort or security by marriage with a man she could not entirely respect and in some degree love. There is no reason to believe that in Roland's case she bought these goods at a price she had hitherto uniformly declined to pay. It cannot, on the other hand, be denied that she was a woman of phrases, or that, sincerely and genuinely attached to a man who loved but hesitated to marry her, she had recognised the necessity of persuading him that her passion had reached or overleapt the height of his own. If there is a taint of duplicity in the exaggeration, few women in her circumstances would perhaps have remained altogether guiltless of it.

She returned to her father's house, whence she went to become the wife of M. Roland and to begin a new life. In a tone of serene content she wrote to Sophie, “My confidant, my friend, my guide, and my support is at my side. Duty and inclination are united and mingle.”

And so ended Marie Jeanne Phlipon's girlhood.



MADAME ROLAND.

From an engraving by Hopwood.





## CHAPTER IX

First years of marriage—Domestic happiness—At Paris and Amiens—  
Views on the position of women—Eudora's birth—Visit to Paris—  
Madame Roland *sollicituse*—Her failure—And success.

THE years following upon Madame Roland's marriage were perhaps the happiest of her life. She had exchanged an existence shadowed and dogged by sordid cares and dependent upon the conduct and caprices of a father of opposite tastes and principles for a different and congenial environment. Over her attitude towards life a perceptible change had likewise passed. To Marie Jeanne Phlipon, child and woman, her personality had represented the central point of the universe. As so often with the young, her sentiments, affections, opinions, beliefs or unbeliefs, had absorbed her attention, to the dwarfing, if not exclusion, of other subjects. The relative unimportance of the individual is one of the lessons life has to teach, whether it is enforced through a widened apprehension of outside interests or through the more painful process of an increasing conviction of personal insignificance. By most the lesson is mastered by slow degrees; by some it is never learnt; and Madame Roland, it may be—not inexcusably—failed to the end to make that knowledge her own. But there are circumstances, such as a strong affection, which cause the centre of interest temporarily to shift, and Manon's eyes were for the moment turned from herself to be directed upon Roland.

It might be true that the love he had inspired was not all that she was capable of feeling. From the standpoint of later years an existence shared with him may, in spite of affection and respect, have appeared to her, not untruly, devoid of some of the elements rendering life most worth living. But in contemporary documents no evidence is found of early disillusionment. Rather, again and again, is her pride in her husband, her full satisfaction, manifest. Her former pursuits, her studies, her occupations, her friends, were all willingly and gladly subordinated to his requirements. As she writes of home, of husband, afterwards of child, she is a different and a softer woman from the girl who passed her time in self-analysis and the cultivation of her mind. Her gaiety is more light-hearted and spontaneous ; she has almost ceased to take herself too seriously ; the attraction she undoubtedly possessed for those brought under the sphere of her influence is more easily understood.

Nevertheless, as before, it is curious to turn from the past unveiled in her letters to the judgment she pronounced upon it.

"Married in all the seriousness of reason," she states in her memoirs, "I found nothing to draw me out of it ; I sacrificed myself with a completeness more enthusiastic than calculated. By dint of studying the happiness of my partner alone, I perceived that something was wanting to my own. I have not ceased for a moment to see in my husband one of the most estimable of men, to whom it was an honour to me to belong ; but I have often felt that equality was lacking between us, that the ascendancy of a dominating character united to that of twenty years more of age rendered one of these two superiorities too great. If we lived in solitude, I passed some painful hours ; if we went into the world, I was loved by men some of whom

I perceived might touch me too closely. I plunged myself into my husband's work—another extreme not without its inconveniences. I accustomed him to be unable to do without me for anything in the world or at any moment."

Such was the summary Madame Roland, looking back, gave of her earlier married life ; such was no doubt the shape it gradually and insensibly assumed. That it had not at all times been so neutral-tinted is clear.

The first year was spent for the most part in Paris, whither Roland had been summoned by his superiors, engaged in issuing new regulations with regard to commerce and manufactures. They were not in conformity with his principles of freedom, and he found himself in conflict with the authorities on the subject. Other work also pressed upon him—the results of his inquiries into different arts were to be printed, the manuscripts he had sent home from Italy to be revised and published in the form of letters. In all this his wife, proud to share his labours, acted as his amanuensis, submitting her judgment to his with a humility she remembered with a smile when time had lent her sufficient confidence to permit her to contradict him. Studies in natural history and botany ran side by side with the duties of the copyist and proof-reader, and alternated with the necessity of providing with her own hands food more appropriate for Roland's delicate health than that supplied by the *hôtel garni* where they lodged. Italian conversation was a recreation sometimes practised ; nor was Manon's music altogether neglected.

It was a happy if a busy life. To be busy, Madame Roland once told a friend, is already to be half-happy ; nor was she disposed to complain of the absence of her former leisure. For outside interests or friends she had little time to spare, and even Henriette Cannet, then in



Paris, she seldom saw. She paid few visits ; the limited space at her command did not facilitate the reception of guests, and she wrote to Sophie that it was scarcely conceivable how the constant presence of some one beloved, with the pressure of duties, absorbed both soul and leisure.

In the course of the summer she paid a short visit to her uncle the Canon, but was in haste to return. "I dream of you," she wrote to Roland in Italian. . . . "What are you doing, or thinking? Alas! how are you? I cannot escape a sort of uneasiness. You are always in my mind. The distance weighs upon my heart; it hurts me."

During the autumn another visit was paid, this time to the Beaujolais, where Manon was presented to her husband's family. If not entirely approving the marriage, they had accepted it with a good grace, received the bride with cordiality, and at Villefranche, where the meeting took place, all went well. Of the octogenarian mother, still full of brightness and gaiety, severe towards herself, indulgent to others, the newcomer had at this time nothing but good to say. In Roland's brothers she felt that she had acquired brothers of her own. And there were other joys—hours when she and Roland, forgetting their laborious days, escaped together into the fields like children on a holiday, and experienced for a brief space the charm of a country life, so new to the town-bred girl, "the blue sky, the wholesome air, the delightful evenings. . . . I do not know how it is, but I find that to enjoy is a thing that absorbs all one's time and leaves none for anything else." The words read pitifully when it is remembered how short were to be the writer's opportunities of enjoyment.

When after two months, she returned to the routine of Parisian life, it was with real regret, so far as regret was possible when Roland was her companion. But with

him at her side, she admitted that she needed no one else.

At the beginning of the year 1781, Roland's work in Paris over, he returned to Amiens, his wife spending some weeks at Rouen and Dieppe before joining him there, partly with the object of making acquaintance with his Norman friends, partly to superintend the printing of his *Lettres d'Italie*.

At Rouen she was the guest of the demoiselles Malortie—the same faithful friends who gave Roland shelter twelve years later and from whose house he went forth to die. Under their hospitable roof Manon laboured at business connected with the publication of his book, sending notes of its progress to Amiens in letters ever breathing the same spirit of devoted attachment.

Roland, for his part, was preparing to introduce his bride to the society of Amiens. Writing of the expectations there entertained concerning her, "The women are terribly afraid of you," he said, "which is better than the reverse. . . . I frequently go to see my neighbour"—Madame d'Eu, wife of another government official—"you are often spoken of. They are afraid of you. I say you are *bonne enfant*, etc."

It was not an accurate description. Sophie had also expressed a fear that her friend might be found alarming. Nor was it unlikely. The inhabitants of the provincial town had little in common with the newcomer, nor would the society to be enjoyed there offer many attractions to a woman always disposed to be fastidious in her choice of associates. By the end of February she was settled in her new home.

Over the three years of peaceful obscurity spent at Amiens it is not necessary to linger long. Happiness is commonly uneventful and the record of it monotonous. The outside world, its interests, its cares, appear to have been almost forgotten in the delights of domestic life.

Even friends counted for little. The prospect of living within reach of Sophie Cannet would once have been hailed by Manon with rapture, and she had anticipated with satisfaction a renewal of intercourse. Roland, preferring to keep his wife to himself, discouraged the intimacy; and though, in Madame Roland's maturer judgment, he had been mistaken in his desire to separate her from her former companions, she yielded to his wishes and meetings were infrequent. Upon the society of the country town she brought a critical judgment to bear, her opinion of the girls she met at Amiens being specially unfavourable. They possessed the assurance of women who had lost their timidity; and their ways and manners, as they talked or gambled, were those of *routières*.

The judgment was perhaps severe. Madame Roland had no liking for emancipated women; her views on their position and duties being in direct opposition to those held elsewhere at a date when the subject was beginning to attract attention. In her eyes wifeness and motherhood was the crown of a woman's existence. With the exception of Madame de Staël the most intellectually brilliant Frenchwoman of her day, destined to become the most prominent feminine figure of the Revolution, she regarded with contemptuous dislike the assumptions usually to be found amongst the advocates of women's rights, and her attitude towards men, at least in theory, would in itself have rendered her anathema to the clamorous and belligerent sisterhood.

"What is the deference, the consideration of your sex for mine," she wrote to a friend, "but the care bestowed by power and generosity upon the weak who are alike honoured and protected? When you assume the tone of a master, you cause it to be thought that, in spite of your strength, resistance is possible. Do you render us homage? It is Alexander treating as queens the captives who are none the less aware of their depen-



dent condition. In this matter alone civilisation has not placed us in conflict with nature. The law almost makes our minority perpetual; custom awards us all the little honours of society. In action we are of no account; in appearance everything. Do not imagine that I deceive myself as to what we can exact, or what you should properly claim. I believe—I will not say more than any other woman, but as much as any man—in the superiority in every respect of your sex. You have, first of all, strength, with all that belongs to it and results from it, courage, perseverance, wide views, and great talents. It is for you to make political laws, scientific discoveries, govern the world, change the surface of the globe, be proud, terrible, clever, learned. All this you can be without us, and by means of all this you should dominate us. But without us you would be neither virtuous, loving, lovable, nor happy. Retain authority and glory in everything; we have, we desire, no empire but that of morals, no throne but in your hearts."

In the autumn of 1781, a little daughter and only child, was born, and her mother's felicity was complete. Refusing to put the child out to nurse after the fashion of the day, Madame Roland devoted herself to the care of it, and during her husband's absences in Paris or elsewhere her letters to him are filled with details of Eudora's health, her physical and mental development, and household affairs. With these matters, no doubt interesting to the anxious husband and father, the general reader is only concerned as evidence of the entire absorption in the ordinary routine of domestic life of a woman subsequently to show herself in so different a light.

At Amiens, as at Paris, Madame Roland continued to co-operate with her husband in his manifold labours, including voluminous contributions to the new *Encyclopædia*, attended him devotedly in his frequent

sicknesses, and lightened as far as possible his toil. She continued her botanical studies, made a herbarium of the Picardy flowers, and cultivated in her little garden plants not intended to produce the gaudy blossoms admired by the vulgar crowd, but interesting to scientific research. A constant correspondence was carried on with M. Louis Bosc d'Antic, also a naturalist, employed in the Post Office at Paris, with whom Madame Roland had become acquainted during her first year of marriage, at a course of botany both were following at the Jardin du Roi. Not more than twenty-two at that time, he had formed with her and with Roland a true and enduring friendship, and when they left for Amiens, letters were almost daily exchanged.

To Bosc, as he came to be called, Manon painted in charming colours the life she was at present leading, with frequent references to the baby Eudora, who at eighteen months old was a little fool who could not throw her ball straight. It would be a bad business if she never learnt to take better aim ; but patience was necessary in all things. If only Bosc had a Eudora of his own ! And if only a man like him, in eighteen years, could think so too—well, then her mother would almost sing her *Nunc Dimittis*.

Eighteen years ! Long before they had passed away, when Eudora, blue-eyed, serene, and placid as her mother had never been, was no more than twelve, she had been left to find her way in the world alone ; and it is a singular fact that three years later Bosc himself had fallen in love with the child of fifteen, and was only deterred by honour, the sense of his position with regard to her—in some sort that of a guardian—and her comparative wealth, from making her at once his wife. Eudora had appeared willing ; delay proved fatal to his hopes ; her constancy did not stand the test of time and separation, and she married the son of M. Champagneux, another

friend of her mother's, to whose care Bosc had committed her. Thus ended the romance so curiously foreshadowed in Madame Roland's letter.

During these happy years it is a continual surprise to find still completely absent from the mind of so shrewd an observer any presentiment of the upheaval destined to prove disastrous to the little household, nor does a reflection appear in the gay and affectionate letters dispatched to Bosc of any public anxiety. As in the days of her girlhood, it would seem that events affecting the public rarely so much as roused in her a passing interest. Politics she found frankly tiresome.

"An excellent man," she wrote of a certain M. de Vin, introducing him to Bosc, ". . . but I could make it a reproach that he is singularly occupied with a *politique gazetière qui m'ennuie*, to the exclusion of all the fine literature I love." Or again, in making mention of "parliamentary diatribes" in Paris, it is only to observe that, there, pamphlets or witticisms were cause or result of the gravest affairs, and good and evil alike were turned into ridicule in order that people might be consoled for the existence of the latter, and the impossibility of the first; proceeding to inquire about the more interesting subject of Bosc's botanical pursuits. The same note of indifference is repeated in a letter from Saily, where she had gone for change of air. "I have no concern with politics," she wrote, "and can talk only of the dogs, by whom I am awakened, of the birds who console me for want of sleep, of the cherry-trees in front of my windows, and the goats grazing on the grass outside."

The letter was dated from the country home of Sophie Cannel, lately married to the Chevalier de Gomicourt. Madame Roland's influence had contributed to decide her upon accepting a man considerably her senior, and she had assured the bride that a country life ministered to the happiness of pure souls. She now confessed that, having



inspected her friend's domains, counted her chickens, gathered her fruit, and agreed on the superiority of these occupations to the pleasures of a town, she was impatient to return to Amiens. Was not Roland there? and the week spent apart seemed an eternity when she thought of the harm overwork might do him in her absence.

A longer separation was to follow. It was at this time that Roland had conceived the idea of soliciting *lettres de noblesse*. His family had enjoyed this distinction, with its attendant privileges, for centuries, although in an untransmittable form; he had the expectation of inheriting their estate, had laboured in the public service for thirty years, and craved his reward. If the demand was subsequently made a ground of reproach against the republican minister, his wife is justified in declaring that at the date it was preferred not a man would have been found to condemn it. Neither Roland himself nor the daughter of the Parisian engraver affected to underrate the advantages of rank and position; neither were as yet committed to any course of action inconsistent with a desire to achieve such advancement, and the boon would have carried with it immunity from taxes, a settled income, and liberty to devote his energies to the pursuits he loved. It was accordingly decided that Madame Roland should repair to Paris, bringing with her the memorial containing the statement of her husband's lineage, genealogy, and claims; and on March 18 she left Amiens, accompanied by her faithful maid Marie Fleury, and took up her abode at the Hôtel de Lyon, where also a young doctor, Lanthenas, lodged, with whom Roland had made acquaintance in Italy and with whom he and his wife were on terms of close intimacy, to continue unbroken till within a few months of the end.

From Paris she wrote day by day, giving reports of her indefatigable endeavours to accomplish the pur-

pose for which she had come. There was no fear that she would leave any means untried. “I shall not go to sleep, nor do I believe that I shall be dumb,” she told Roland. In leisure hours Bosc—though oppressed by domestic anxieties—and Lanthenas were her constant companions, and amongst old acquaintances revisited was the lay sister Agathe who had been her devoted friend from childhood. With her father it would seem that the breach had been complete, since she told Roland that Phlipon, visiting the convent, had complained of her firmness in declining to write to him. For the rest, her letters, like her days, were chiefly occupied with the business in hand and with her attempts to interest the possessors of power or influence in her husband’s cause.

“Here I am *tout de bon sollicitieuse et intrigante*,” she wrote from Versailles in April—“it is a stupid trade ! But I practise it, and not at all by halves ; otherwise it would be useless to meddle in it. I have seen many people, and am no further advanced ; I have indulged delightful hopes, then terrible fears.” She had visited M. Collart at the office of the Comptroller-General ; had made interest with the first woman of Madame Adelaïde to solicit the intervention of her mistress ; had called upon divers other persons—all with the same object. “In truth, it is pitiful and disgusting. Here I am, thrown into it like a ball that has been flung in this direction. Where I shall go God knows—perhaps to break my nose.”

It is useless to follow in detail her vain endeavours to obtain the coveted distinction. Roland’s new superiors, jealous as she believed of his length of service and greater knowledge, distrustful also of his principles of free trade, gave his claims cold support. Conscientious, industrious, and upright, he was stiff-necked, obstinate, and unbending—all qualities calculated to render him disliked,



and his wife's charm failed to overcome the obstacles in her path.

Her activity was amazing. Officials were propitiated, persons in authority won over, hindrances removed. She was so conversant with the part she had to play, she wrote, that she could have performed it before the King. That Roland had no son was considered to be against him, and she did not hesitate to insinuate that the birth of another child was expected. She might have spared herself her pains. Roland was not to be ennobled, and she was to go home defeated.

Though much must have been repugnant to her in the pursuit of her object, to find herself once more in contact with the vivid life of the capital after three years of absence may not have been unwelcome to the Parisian born and bred. In spite of her detachment from public affairs, she cannot have failed to be affected by the general excitement at a time when Paris was crowding to look on at the *Mariage de Figaro*, produced after years of prohibition, the nobles against whom the farce was directed being loudest of all in their amused applause. Mesmerism was another source of interest. Most of all, to a woman of her temperament, the exercise of her own power of dealing with men must have afforded satisfaction. That power was soon to be acknowledged by all, to be a danger to be reckoned with by her enemies, a weapon in the hands of her friends. At Amiens it had been in abeyance. In Paris, brought by her mission into relations with all sorts and conditions of men, she had ample opportunities of trying and testing it, and the result must have been gratifying. That she was conscious of it is plain. Were she in Paris, in possession of a certain income and able to devote herself to business or even to intrigue, she said lightly, it would not cost her much trouble to produce great effects. At the time the words might



have seemed an idle boast, but the future was to justify it. Bosc shared her confidence. "She is astonishing," he told Roland.

Defeated in the main object of her mission, she did not allow herself to be discouraged nor consent to go home empty-handed. Abandoning for the present the hope of letters of *noblesse*, she determined, as a *pis aller*, to obtain promotion for her husband in his profession, and succeeded in having him transferred from Amiens to the more important post of Lyons, with the additional advantage of placing him in his native province and near his family.

If it was not all she had hoped for, it was a real achievement, and with pardonable triumph she wrote to Roland, May 22, that the thing was done, and that M. Tolozan, one of the intendants of commerce, whom she had been wont to call "the Bear," had told her that she might leave Paris if she wished to do so, that he would care for her interests and make them his business ; adding, after prolonged counsels as to Roland's future duties, kindly advice as to the wisdom of modifying his stiffness and hot temper. Farewells were then taken after an affectionate fashion, and Madame Roland was at liberty to consider her labours at an end, and to look forward to returning to the home she longed to see again.

"How much grown I shall find Eudora ! I hope she will not be in bed when I arrive. I want to taste all that is mine, to be in your arms and to take Eudora into my own. O just Heaven ! may the delightful moments hasten ! Adieu, my dear friend ; still a week to go by—the longest in all my life."

It seems that she did not leave Paris after all alone, but that some attack of illness caused Roland to join her there ; and that the two made the journey to Amiens together.

Absence from home, in spite of her success, had its

drawbacks. She might have created a favourable impression in the capital, but—Eudora had forgotten her. “Poor Eudora,” she told Bosc, “did not recognise her sorrowful mother, who had anticipated it, and yet cried over it like a child. . . . I cannot think of it without a terrible swelling of my heart. . . . I wish she still wanted milk and that I had it to give her.”

Before the move to Lyons was accomplished, a three weeks’ visit to England was paid. The prevalent Anglo-mania was at its height. Serious French politicians studied the English constitution; philosophers admired the English character; men of the world—the future *Égalité* at their head—copied English fashions, and were attended by diminutive “jokeis”; English riding-coats—*rédingotes*—were worn; English racehorses, with their riders, were imported; and Madame Roland, with her insatiable longing for fresh knowledge, rejoiced in the opportunity of studying the nation at home. It answered fully to her expectations. “I shall ever,” she wrote, “remember, with singular interest, the country made known to me by Delolme. He caused me to love its constitution, of which I have witnessed the happy results. Let fools exclaim and slaves cry out; but believe that in England there are men who have the right to laugh at us.” Had Bosc been there, she told him later, he would have been in love with all the women—she herself had come near to it. He was to believe that whoso did not feel esteem for Englishmen, and a tender interest, mingled with admiration, for Englishwomen, was a *lâche*, a fool, or an ignorant sot.

The expedition had, in fact, proved an unqualified success, and the home-coming was, on this occasion, joyful. Eudora, in bed when the travellers arrived, recognised her parents, kissed her mother with grave affection, and gave a cry of surprise and joy on catching sight of her father—the father she afterwards said she

had always adored, even before she had been capable of fully knowing him.

And so the sojourn of the Rolands at Amiens drew to a close. By October 3 Le Clos had been reached, and some weeks of country life were enjoyed before they were installed in the family house at Villefranche where they were to make their home.



## CHAPTER X

At Lyons—Domestic life—Friendships with Lanthenas and Bosc—Madame Roland *femme de ménage*—Life at Lyons, Villefranche, and Le Clos.

IN the discharge of his duties at Lyons Roland passed the interval between his appointment to the post and his summons to Paris. At Lyons the Revolution found him and his wife, and thence it swept them away, to their ultimate destruction.

It was on the whole a peaceful and happy time. Though Roland's work lay in the town itself, his presence there was only intermittently necessary, nor was it more than occasionally, and for a couple of months in the winter, that his wife and child made it their home; the remainder of the year being spent either at Villefranche, where they shared the old family house with his mother and brother, or in the freedom of country life at the Clos de la Platière.

The advantages of the joint household at Villefranche were obvious. It was an economical arrangement, whilst the duties of which her mother-in-law, "as old as the century," was incapable and the master of the house, a Canon and town councillor, was weary could be devolved upon Manon. But it carried with it considerable drawbacks. Nearer acquaintance with Roland's aged mother was destined to reverse the favourable impression made at first sight upon her daughter-in-law. Her temper was violent and her criticism sharp. With her husband's brother, a man of the world and of importance in

his native town, Manon was on better terms. But there could never have been much in common between the two ; and the Canon's habits and prejudices could not fail to bring him into conflict with a younger brother of opposite views, obstinate and proud, and tenacious of his freedom.

Had Manon not been rendered independent of her environment by closer interests, Villefranche would have been a place of abode little to her taste. The town itself, with its flat roofs, open drains, and general absence of cleanliness, was not attractive. Luxury in the matter of food, the ugliness of the buildings, the attention paid to dress, and the habit of constant gambling, were the leading characteristics of the little country town noted by the newcomer. On the other hand, she admitted that its inhabitants were intelligent and talked well, the men being more agreeable and less provincial than the women.

Madame Roland would probably have preferred in most cases the society of men. Since the decline of her friendship with the Cannet sisters, no trace of any intimacy with a woman as yet appears ; and before she left Amiens a definite breach had taken place between her and Sophie, owing to a quarrel with the husband of the latter. The affair had caused her real sorrow, and in writing of it to Bosc she said that other vexations of a similar kind had led her almost to echo his words, to the effect that more ruptures had occurred in a week than during the whole course of his previous life.

The blank was filled in part by the closeness of the tie with Lanthenas and with Bosc himself. If Bosc was for the most part detained in Paris by the duties of his post, Lanthenas had much leisure on his hands, and was received, at Villefranche as at Amiens, on terms of brotherly familiarity. At the Clos de la Platière he

was so frequent a guest that a room continued for long to bear his name; and, as was the case later on with Bancal des Issarts, he desired at one time to become a permanent member of the household—a suggestion approved by Roland, but negatived, from obvious reasons of prudence, by his wife. Though not blind to the defects and deficiencies of the young man, Manon was genuinely attached to him, and her disappointment when he failed to stand the test applied by the Revolution was sincere.

Her friendship with Bosc, notwithstanding temporary eclipses, lasted to the end, having been from the first untouched on either side by sentiment. “Many people believed,” he afterwards wrote, “owing to my intimacy with her, that we had *relations de cœur*; but she never inspired me with the wish to possess her.” The affection uniting the older woman and the young man was cordial and true, and the shadows by which it was temporarily obscured caused Madame Roland real concern. Bosc, it would appear, was peculiarly liable to take offence, and though sensitiveness of this kind is apt to render the cost of a friendship too great, she never grew weary of soothing his wounded feelings or endeavouring to recapture his trust and affection. About the date of the move to Lyons he had strangely resented the fact that Roland, for whom his father, a doctor, had prescribed, had had recourse—the elder Bosc being dead—to another physician. A scene ensued testifying to the condition into which the indignant son had been thrown by so excusable an infidelity; and Bosc left Madame Roland crushed, motionless, and in tears. An additional cause of complaint seems to have been that his friends, acquainted with the young man’s idiosyncracies, had thought it well to take the step in silence. “Young, sensitive friend,” wrote Madame Roland in reference to this reserve, “will you punish those who love you for having treated



you with the *ménagement* their own sensitiveness felt to be due to yours?"

Bosc remained unpropitiated; nor was it till months had passed that the cloud was dispelled. The letters in which Madame Roland strove, now by loving remonstrance, now by impatient or serious protest, to recover the young man's confidence supply attractive examples of her fashion of winning hearts. The day would come, she told him again and again, that he would do his friends justice and would make up to them by a perfect trust for the confidence he withheld. Let him meantime accept a good box on the ear and a very friendly kiss—she was hungry for one of his old letters. Little Eudora was made to join in pleading for the renewal of his former affection. He was the child's friend. He would not impute to her the faults he ascribed to her parents, and in that character alone he had a claim on her mother's love. The patience displayed by Madame Roland in dealing with the situation, the tact and grace of her remonstrances, her resolute refusal to take offence or to shut the door against full reconciliation, were rewarded, and the old terms were gradually re-established.

Meanwhile, Roland had lost no time in getting to work, and was obtaining an honourable position amongst the foremost inhabitants of Lyons and Villefranche. Elected a member of both academies, his contributions to contemporary literature, scientific and practical, were many and various. Whilst he laboured for the public good, his wife's hands were full. The care of her child, constantly under her eye, domestic avocations, the necessity of keeping her mother-in-law company when other guests did not relieve her from the obligation—all these duties filled her days at Villefranche, almost to the exclusion of the studies she loved. She had become "femme de ménage avant tout," and the higher knowledge was to be buried until such time as it should be

necessary to unearth it for Eudora's benefit—Eudora, the object of her mother's absorbed attention, whose cough, when she catches a cold, tears her mother's heart, whose habits and temperament, the moods in which she is a *démon*, the oath she has learnt from a servant, the dangers she may run from vipers, her awakening intelligence, all find a place in her letters. Roland and Eudora fill her world. "For me—I feel it," she wrote to her husband—"I see nothing but you two." To Roland, looking back to this time in days to come, when neither he nor Eudora were to occupy the first place in his wife's heart, the remembrance of what had been may well have caused an agony of regret.

Less admirable than the zeal she displayed in the performance of domestic duties was Madame Roland's practice of a religion in which she had ceased so much as to wish to believe. Her brother-in-law, the Canon, was a religious man; he was also a prominent inhabitant of Villefranche; and she believed that it was incumbent upon her to act up to the relationship. "I leave him the satisfaction of thinking that his dogmas appear to me as evident as they seem to him; and I behave in a manner becoming the mother of a family in the provinces, who should edify all the world. . . . The sincerity, the disposition of my heart, the ease with which I shape myself to what is good for others, without damage or detriment to honesty, renders me all that I should be quite naturally and without the least difficulty." So she told Bosc, enjoining him to keep her confidence to himself. Once more, it is hard to reconcile a deliberate system of dissimulation with the genuine candour and sincerity distinguishing Madame Roland in most other respects; and it can only be classed as one of the inconsistencies that startle us in human nature.

Thus the months slipped by, after a fashion the ex-Parisian admitted would be "*très austère*" had not

her husband been a man for whom she had infinite love. As it was, she found the life delightful, each moment being marked by tender affection and a sweet trust.

Visits to Lyons or Le Clos afforded some relief from the "austerity" of Villefranche. There at least she had husband and child to herself; the old mother with her terrible temper was left behind; no scoldings had to be faced, no criticism to be endured. Peace and freedom reigned; and having made her escape, Manon could take a philosophical view of her trials. Imagining that her mother-in-law had a heart, she had laboured to win it. Having arrived at the certainty that she had none, indifference and something like pity replaced her anger. After all, with a husband such as hers it would be paradise here below had she no counterbalancing causes of trouble.

At Lyons Roland had taken an apartment in a pleasant quarter of the town, large enough to accommodate his family, and with a room for Lanthenas when he liked to occupy it. A friend lent his wife a carriage; acquaintances were made; there were plays to be seen, visits to be paid, dinners to be eaten; and Manon confessed that she would not have objected to bear Roland company for the three months he was to spend there. During one of her first stays at Lyons she was reminded of an old mistake. Her former lover, La Blancherie, was visiting the town, and tales of his vanity and egoism reached her ears. Having begged the Director of the Academy to admit him to a *séance*, he had been met by the courteous inquiry whether he desired to become an associate. The reply was in the negative. He could be a member, he declared, of no Academy; he would in that case have to belong to all those of Europe. It is not surprising that public opinion in Lyons pronounced his fatuity insufferable.

"Between ourselves," added Madame Roland—alas



for vanished illusions!—"I am not altogether surprised; for it seems to me that he showed some tendency that way ten years ago, and so long an interval, spent in worldly intrigues, must have served to develop it wonderfully."

Her happiest days, however, were passed neither at Villefranche nor at Lyons, but in the country. There, on the old Roland property, the Parisian born and bred found herself curiously at home, throwing herself with characteristic energy into the pursuits and pleasures of the life around her, and winning the hearts of the simple country people as she won those of men in a different sphere.

The Clos de la Platière, according to a traveller who made a pilgrimage there some fifteen years ago,<sup>1</sup> is a square-built white country house on the outskirts of the village of Thièze, shut in by high yellow walls and flanked on one side by farm and vintage buildings. Upon the other side, the garden where Madame Roland cultivated the flowers she loved lies between stone terraces commanding a wide view of the Beaujolais country, its vineyards and orchards, woods and hills. In the far distance it is possible, when the atmosphere is clear, to catch a glimpse of the summit of Mont Blanc.

Here it was that more and more of her time was spent as the years went by, preserving her fruits, superintending the vintage, gathering the almonds and nuts, drying raisins and prunes. Here it was that she learnt to understand and to love the peasants around her; using the knowledge of medicine she possessed on their behalf and becoming the physician of the village folk.

"How easily the countryman gives his trust!" she wrote afterwards, her thoughts reverting to the peaceful days at Le Clos. "They say he is not grateful. It is

<sup>1</sup> Miss Tarbell.

true that I never claimed to place any one under an obligation ; but they loved me, and when I was absent they regretted me with tears."

Winter, too, though passed under less favourable circumstances, was not without its pleasures. Little descriptions, full of tender touches, give a picture of peaceful hours when, seated by the fire, Eudora knitting at her side, Roland at his writing-table, and the snow falling without, Manon counted as nothing the petty vexations of her lot. She was not of the number of the unfortunate who only recognise that they have been happy when happiness is past ; she enjoyed every moment as it came with the fullness with which it was granted to her to enjoy, and the woman who was soon to show herself in so different a light was more than content to remain buried in obscurity, to be the house-keeper of a provincial family, Roland's companion and friend, to assist him ungrudgingly in the routine of business, and to spend her days watching over Eudora's health and devoting herself to the child's discipline and training.

It was, it is true, no more than a stage in her career ; but of this she was ignorant ; nor is there any sign that she would not have been content to let it last for ever, the only changes in her mode of existence being supplied by her three places of residence, Lyons, Villefranche, and Le Clos. According to which of these three was her habitation, her private barometer, she once explained, varied. At Lyons she was possessed with a spirit of mockery and gaiety ; her imagination was stimulated, and a jest might be met by a retort with a sharpened edge. At Villefranche she was occupied and serious, was properly impressed by what went on around her, and showed it. Everything received its due weight, and she could sermonise on occasion. She might feel, but she also reasoned. In the country

she had forgiveness to bestow upon every one ; her friends might show themselves in their true colours, be original, might sermonise—they might even be surly if necessary. Her indulgence would be unfailing, her affection tolerant of all and suited to every mood. So she wrote, with a return to the old spirit of self-observation and analysis of her girlhood.

If Madame Roland's friends would have chosen to visit her at Le Clos, one thing remained the same whatever her environment might be. Everywhere the note of devotion to Roland is apparent ; nor does it lessen as the years slip by. Should business call him away, it was in the country that she could best endure his absence—thus she wrote in reference to a separation occurring in the course of the year 1786. When Roland was in Paris and his wife and child awaited his return at Le Clos "we talk of you," wrote Madame Roland of the five-year-old Eudora ; "she loves you much, more than she loves me, she tells me plainly. I kiss her for her sincerity, I tell her she is right, and we end by asking each other 'When will he come back ?' I go to bed at ten, I rise at seven ; . . . when I feel a little tired I go down to the garden and walk on the terrace ; the scented air regenerates and moves me ; I think of you, or rather I do nothing but feel. My brain is at rest, and I vegetate delightfully, with my heart so full of you that its beating and your existence seem to me one and the same thing."

In alluding to a belated letter her tone is again that of a lover, and in the joy of reunion all other pleasures are merged and lost. Roland, herself, Eudora—all else was of secondary importance.

"I am well ; I love you to madness, and I am inclined to laugh at everything else," she wrote one evening in 1787, when Roland was kept by his duties at Lyons. And so the years went by.



## CHAPTER XI

Vintage-time at Le Clos—The approach of the catastrophe—Succeeding ministers—Madame Roland passive—Fall of the Bastille—The Rolands' revolutionary enthusiasm—Disturbances in the Beaujolais—Madame Roland an extremist in politics.

“WHY do you not write to us—you who have no vintage to attend to? Are there any other occupations in the world? But you are lost to sight in politics, and exhaust yourself in dissertations upon the good which should be done and will never come to pass. What is become of M. Necker? They say there is a terrible party against him. And the great devil of an Archbishop! He was reported to have gone to Rome. Now they say he is kept under supervision. May God grant peace to the good and destroy the wicked! Give a little remembrance to your friends at the end of the world, who have not forgotten you.”

Thus Madame Roland wrote to Bosc in Oct. 1788, in one of the letters constantly sent him—letters sometimes affectionate, sometimes impatient, now displaying a charming gaiety, more seldom reflecting a mood of dejection, and ever full of sympathy in all that concerned her friend. It was the very eve of the Revolution, yet she remained, it would seem, all unconscious of the approaching catastrophe. “The fool says in his heart, How shall not to-morrow be as yesterday, as all days which were once to-morrows?” Not fools alone are prone to forget that an end must come to all things and that a long life is premonitory of its close

rather than an assurance of immortality. Madame Roland was not singular in her blindness. The Revolution might be to many a familiar term; but the significance attached to the word was far removed from the sense in which it was to be used after it had become a reality. What did it mean, for instance, on the lips of Calonne, the minister, when he suggested that a poet should use as his theme the Assembly of the Notables "and the Revolution that was in preparation"? What did Madame Roland understand by it when she wrote, in reference to changes in the administration of the law, that on the whole all the little tribunals at Lyons were pleased with the "Revolution"?

Yet there were indications enough of what the word might come to signify to make men pause before they employed it. One administrator of the finances after another had attempted to solve the problem they presented during the years that Madame Roland was carrying on Eudora's education, preserving fruit at Le Clos, and superintending the domestic arrangements at Villefranche. One by one they had tried their hands at reducing disorder to order and averting the impending bankruptcy; one by one they had failed. The Assembly of Notables had been convened and dismissed, with little or no result from their deliberations. Loménie de Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse, had succeeded Calonne when Calonne, courtier as he was, had been driven to propose to subject all classes alike to a land-tax, and had fallen from office in consequence. Loménie, in his turn, had been compelled to suggest not only a land but a stamp-tax, also to be levied from all classes—a measure of which the Parlement of Paris barred the way by a refusal to register his edicts. Only the States-General, it affirmed, could assume that responsibility. And the demand that the Three Estates should be summoned to assemble was caught up and spread through France as a popular cry,

the Parlement meanwhile—its contumacy having been met by *lettres de cachet* and exile to Troyes in Champagne—occupying the little-merited position of a band of martyrs.

By these events, and many more, the situation was making its gravity felt. It was in that winter of 1787-8 that the Queen, asking Besenval his opinion of the condition of affairs, received from him the uncourtier-like reply that the King's crown was in danger—to which she returned no answer. It must have been hard to believe that matters had reached that point.

Throughout the following spring and summer the struggle between the royal authority and the Parlement went on. If the Parlement had refused the King the money he required, Loménie had devised a counter-stroke—the institution, namely, of lesser courts of law, *Grands Bailliages*, which would replace the Parlement in trying the lesser lawsuits, would cheapen justice for the public and diminish the Parliamentary fees; whilst a Plenary Court, composed of great dignitaries and princes, charged with the duty of registering the royal edicts and decrees, would, if not reduce the Parlement to obedience, render its disobedience inoperative. The secret of this last measure, in spite of the precautions taken to prevent the news of it getting abroad until all was ready, was betrayed. Paris, on May 3, 1788, heard the news, and popular indignation rose to fever heat. Not only the Parlement of Paris, but every provincial Parlement, was in revolt; between the metropolitan body and the King was open war; the two leaders of the opposition were arrested and sent into captivity; their colleagues were dismissed, the Palais de Justice left empty; the Plenary Court—described by a wit as an “*héroï-tragi-comédie en trois actes et en prose, jouée par une société d'amateurs*”—met once and no more. The States-General, in concession to popular clamour,



were to assemble in May 1789. Till then the new measures were to remain in abeyance.

"It is the first beat of the drum, of ill omen for France," Marie Antoinette told Madame Campan, announcing to her the King's decision. In the meantime, and in the absence of cash, Loménie invited, as a last resource, Necker to resume the management of the finances. With Necker's refusal Loménie fell; and by the end of August the popular minister was recalled, not as Loménie's subordinate, but to carry on the government in his own right.

His return was welcomed with enthusiasm. The sanguine multitude anticipated that all would now be well, and it was celebrated by triumphant riots in Paris. Crowds gathered on the Pont Neuf—where Manon Phlipon no longer looked on at the demonstrations—to do honour to the statue of Henri-Quatre, symbol of a democratic royalty, and to force the passers-by, whether Princes of the Blood or personages of less note, to pay homage to the King who had been the friend of the people. Collisions took place between mob and soldiers; there was a cavalry charge, and many were killed and wounded before the tumult was quelled.

On September 22 the Parlement returned from its provincial exile, and for twenty-four hours enjoyed the popularity resulting from it. The next day, having declared itself in favour of a form of the States-General in which the Third Order would be practically subordinated to the united *noblesse* and clergy, it fell for ever into disrepute with the people. The future *Égalité*, on the other hand, promulgated the maxim that the Third Estate constituted in itself the nation, and by some men a lingering hope was entertained that it might make common cause with royalty against the two orders by whom it had been oppressed and robbed.

No more than the bare outline of the events that were taking place during these momentous months can be given; yet it is necessary to bear them in mind if Madame Roland's strange passivity at this time is to be given its value. Was the lightness of her allusions to politics the result of incredulity of the possibility of radical changes? It is certain that it could not be owing to ignorance. At Lyons, as at Amiens, Roland had been brought, by reason of his position with regard to commerce and manufactures, into intimate personal contact with the crying grievances of the class whose interests were entrusted to him; with the restrictions on the produce of materials; with the taxes and imposts by which the producers were crippled; with the difficulties and expenses attending the privilege of exercising a trade. All these were only too well known to a man by principle and sympathy a lover of freedom and justice. Nor would his wife and fellow-labourer have been less cognisant of them than he. Lyons had become an object-lesson in the ruin that was overtaking the entire kingdom. Unfortunate in having attracted the attention of the Government by its mercantile prosperity, the town had in consequence been reduced by forced loans and other exactions to a condition verging on bankruptcy. If it required money, it was granted the fatal privilege of self-taxation; and the streets were filled with beggars. All this was going on at the time that Madame Roland was writing to complain that Bosc was immersed in politics and to ask gaily whether any other business save that of the vintage existed. Hopeless of amelioration, was she resolutely refusing to face the fact that, for better or for worse, it had become imperative that radical changes should take place? Did she, as M. Perroud concludes, believe that the present condition of things would endure, and strive, therefore, to accommodate

herself to it? If she could not fail to feel regret, it was a passive regret. "Let us wait and see. Let us bless America, and weep beside the waters of Babylon"—so she wrote, and the words reflect the spirit in which, when politics were forced upon her notice, she was inclined to regard them. What is to be noted is that, conspicuous amongst revolutionists as she was destined to become, it was the Revolution that sought her, not she the Revolution, and that until she received her call to take a part in it, she had been more than content with the obscurity of a happy domestic life.

"Let us wait and see." The time of waiting was not to be long. By July of the following year the National Assembly had met and the Bastille had fallen. Liancourt's historic reply to Louis' exclamation had been made: "It is not a revolt; it is a revolution." The Revolution was indeed begun.

The earlier part of that summer had been a period of trouble and alarm at Lyons. Roland had fallen ill at the beginning of June, and for three weeks his life was in danger. The condition into which his wife was thrown is shown by a short note addressed to Bosc on June 9. "I am experiencing in long draughts the loss of all I have dearest in the world. A smile on my lips and death in my heart, I hold out hopes all day that I no longer feel. Pity me, weep for me; for soon my grief will no longer know tears."

It might have been better for him, if not for both, that, loving and loved, Roland's life had then ended. This was not to be, and he was presently undergoing a long and tedious convalescence. Meantime, through the length and breadth of France, the news from Paris spread, striking terror into some hearts, awakening others from the apathy of despair into the fierce activity of hope. Of Madame Roland's frame of mind at this juncture a letter dated twelve days after the decisive



stroke had been dealt is descriptive. It shows that, once for all, once for ever—the short ever that remained to her—she was roused from her attitude of contemplation and expectancy and was ready to fling herself into the battle, eager to keep alight the fire that had burst into flame, and to urge men on to complete the work begun. She would seem to have recognised the influence that she, the wife of a provincial official, was presently to exercise and to feel within her the capacity for swaying men.

“No,” she told Bosc, “you are not free. No one yet is free. Public confidence has been betrayed ; letters are intercepted. You complain of my silence ; I write to you by every post. It is true that I say little of our personal affairs. Who is the traitor who has any other affairs now but the affairs of the nation ? . . . You are no more than children ; your enthusiasm is a fire of straw ; and if the National Assembly does not formally institute proceedings against two illustrious heads, or that some generous Decius does not strike at them, you are all—— If this letter does not reach you, may the cowards who read it blush on finding that it is from a woman, and tremble in thinking that she can create a hundred enthusiasts, who will make millions more.”

It was the voice of a woman who knew her power. The letter was written at a moment of intense excitement, mingled with panic. The air was full of reports, true or false, of what was going on in Paris and in the provinces—of plots hatching at court, of English brigands subsidised to intimidate the country, of pirates hired to intercept vessels in the Mediterranean laden with corn. Bourg-en-Bresse, not far from Lyons, was petitioning Louis to prosecute those by whom he had been deceived—the phrase being intended to designate the Queen and his brothers. “La grande peur” was creating a panic in the country. Madame Roland herself, leaving Roland still incapacitated by sickness at Lyons, was hastening

to Le Clos to care for the safety of the property, deemed to be in danger. She was not a timid woman, and was soon reassured as to any imminent peril. Three or four landowners, she wrote, had intrenched themselves in their châteaux with guns and ammunition, and had been seconded by certain brigands escaped from Lyons, of whose number a dozen had been arrested at Villefranche. One of the little "seigneurs" had thereupon come with ten followers, sword in hand, to demand the release of their comrades, had been met by the citizens, and had hastened to retire. This was all.

Whilst Madame Roland was at Le Clos, Roland was writing to Bosc, begging for information as to what was going on at Paris, and was expressing his opinion, in terms no less energetic than those employed by his wife, of the necessity of drastic measures. "There are many secret enemies, who will continue to work underground so long as heads are not forfeited without distinction of rank or number." The higher the position of the criminal, the more dangerous he became, and the more summarily must he be dealt with. Letters of this date corroborate the statement Madame Roland afterwards made, to the effect that the Revolution was from the first welcomed by both her and Roland with enthusiasm. "Friends of humanity, worshippers of liberty, we believed it had come to regenerate the species, to destroy the withering misery of the unhappy class by which we had so often been moved ; we received it with transport."

Philosophical theories seemed suddenly to have become workable, life-giving principles ; dreams were transmuted into actualities ; and all the energies of body, soul, and spirit were called into play to aid in the redemption of humanity. Madame Roland was a practical woman. In a happy domestic existence she had lost her interest in speculations, to quote her own words, "upon the good that should be done and would never come to pass."

At the root of what might wear the guise of indifference and was at the least quiescence, the old question, *cui bono*? might have lain. To what end should heart and mind be wearied with the ceaseless contemplation of ills that could not be amended? Now all was changed, nor, where good could be effected, was she the woman to spare herself or those she loved danger and fatigue. Yet even now she may have failed to realise, save at intervals, how the entire life of the nation and of individuals was destined to be absorbed in the revolutionary current; and a letter written not more than a month after the event with which all France was ringing shows her with thought and attention to devote to her ordinary pursuits.

"It is not only the citizen I address to-day," she wrote to Bosc, "but the naturalist. We do not abandon politics—they are too interesting at the present moment, and we should not deserve to have a country were we to become indifferent to public affairs. The days, nevertheless, are long . . . and one must have more than one subject to feed upon." She therefore wished to learn whether Erxleben was the latest authority on some aspects of natural history, or whether his work had been superseded by more recent writers? Some of his explanations, too, were expressed by figures which neither she nor Roland understood. Would Bosc interpret? "*Fiat lux*. It is your business."

Bosc, naturalist as he was, probably had little leisure in Paris for scientific investigation. The time that his correspondent herself would devote to these matters was also drawing to a close; and ten days later she confessed her readiness to forsake science in favour of politics. At demonstrations alarming to more timid natures she looked on with approval. In the present condition of things insurrections appeared to her inevitable; it was not possible to sweep away corruption and rise to liberty



without convulsions "un peu vives." They were the salutary crises of a serious malady. The rights of the people must be made clear, be submitted for the general assent, and the constitution should follow. Meantime, for her part, "one must stay at one's post and not be a rebel to surrounding influences."

If the words were calm, the temperament of the writer was not of a kind to remain uninfected by what was going forward, nor could the contagion of the prevailing excitement be long withstood. The middle classes of Lyons, like other bourgeois, feared change and shrank from it, and revolutionary opinions were unpopular. But Roland and his wife were not disposed to abstain from the avowal of their opinions. Madame Roland flung herself with ardour into the work of proselytism, preached the new gospel where she could gain a hearing, contributed to the *Patriot Français*, a paper lately started by Brissot, and boasted that she had induced a surgeon and a curé to take it in. Progress, however, could be but slow. Villefranche, like other provincial towns, had an aristocracy of its own—risen, as she contemptuously observed, from the dust and imagining that it could shake it off by affecting the prejudices of a higher class. Her brother-in-law the Canon was obstinate and zealous in opposition to the new ideas, and introduced an element of friction into family life.

Nor would Madame Roland, any more than the priest, have been inclined to conciliation. She is to be ranked—even from these early days—amongst the extremists of her party. Others might advocate half-measures of reform, might wish to make terms with the authorities, might feel compassion for those who were the victims of a vicious system rather than personally responsible for it. But Marie Jeanne Roland, like the English Puritans, would have no compromise with the abuses she denounced, would have the evil cleared away root

and branch. The pathetic scenes in Paris left her unmoved. "I am convinced," she had written in July with reference to the visit paid by King and Queen to the National Assembly, "that half the Assembly was fool enough to be touched at the sight of Antoinette commending her son to them. *Morbleu*, it may well be a question of a child! It is a question of the well-being of twenty millions of men." Perhaps the indignant scorn of the mother of Eudora—of whom in this same letter a detailed picture is given—might have been less had she, like the foolish members of whom she wrote, been a witness of the appeal of that other mother and child. Imagination was never her strong point, and it is easy to remain unaffected by a tragedy performed at a distance.

A biographer is not an apologist. Madame Roland was no saint, nor, the days of her devout childhood past, would she have aspired to the title. She was the woman of her age, with its faults and its virtues; its courage, self-sacrifice, and generosity; its lost faiths and its new creeds; its large-hearted pity for suffering humanity, combined with something of hardy indifference to individual pain; its fierce revolt against the oppression of centuries; and finally, the boundless hopes which forbade those who cherished them to take account of side issues. To forward the realisation of these hopes she would have given—she did, in fact, give—her life and the lives dearest to her. It would have been vain to expect her to be turned from her purpose by what she would have looked upon as the weakness of a blind compassion.

Of her girlhood self-love had been, by her confession, a dominating force. In marriage it had been replaced by love of the man to whom she had given herself, with whom she identified herself. Now family affection in its turn was superseded by the love

of her country. She recognised unflinchingly its right to the first place, and was ready to sacrifice all upon its altar. "The terror of reform," says Emerson, "is the discovery that we must cast away our virtues, or what we have always esteemed such, into the same pit that has consumed our grosser vices." Private interest, domestic happiness, must not be permitted to weigh in the balance. "I know not whether you are in love," she told Bosc, "but I do know that, under our present circumstances, no honest man can follow the torch of love if it has not first been lit at the sacred fire of the love of country." And again, some months later, the same note is sounded. "What! you too," she wrote, "would find consolation in distraction? Is that the part a patriot should play? Your courage, with that of all good citizens, should be kindled; you should put forward your claims, should thunder, should terrify. . . . Adieu. If you grieve, I shall say that you are playing the part of a woman—a part that I would not take upon myself. Either one must watch and preach to one's last breath, or else have nothing to do with revolution."

From beginning to end Madame Roland carried out the programme she traced. To her last breath she worked and watched and preached.



## CHAPTER XII

Madame Roland absorbed in public affairs—An interlude at Le Clos—  
First acquaintance with Bancal des Issarts—Her relations with  
him—Eudora a disappointment—Roland sent to Paris.

IN the autumn of 1789 one of the last links between Madame Roland and her childhood was broken by the death of her uncle, Canon Bimont, to whom she had always continued attached, with the hope of one day inducing him to share her home. The sorrow came at a moment when she had little attention to spare for personal losses. Troops had been summoned to Versailles, and a counter-revolutionary blow was expected. With the possibility of the triumph of the Court in view, other misfortunes were dwarfed.

"All sorrows cease, all grief is suspended," wrote Madame Roland, "all private matters are obliterated. Despotism has thrown off the mask ; the nation *a prison élan* : let right-minded people rally together, and may their intimate union strike terror into the bad ! Courage and arms : this is already recognised, but it is not enough. There must be a regulated administration, sure methods, a wise course of action, and an enlightened vigilance," and she went on to give her opinion as to the best means of proceeding. It is curious that, writing at Lyons and before the news of what had taken place in Paris on October 5th and 6th had reached the provincial town, she laid stress upon the necessity of transferring the National Assembly from Versailles to Paris—a stroke which was then accomplished.

Thus, in anxiety and hope, the months went by. If much remained to be done, much had been achieved. "The Revolution, all imperfect as it is," she wrote to Brissot early in 1790, "has changed the face of France. It has developed in it a character, and we had none. It has given truth a free course by which its worshippers may profit."

Yet, absorbed as she was fast becoming in the political situation, there were lulls—breathing-spaces in the life of strenuous excitement which was replacing the serene content of earlier days—times when in the quiet of Le Clos she could turn for a moment to the studies and occupations she had loved, and, resting in her country home, could gather strength for the approaching battle.

An interlude of this kind she enjoyed in May 1790. Hope was still new and yet well assured, and freedom was regarded as so certain as almost to have become a fact. All France, from north to south, was forming itself into federations, and a universal federation of all Frenchmen was in contemplation—an oath of brotherhood which should obliterate the distinction of province and town and merge all local differences in a common bond.

At Le Clos Madame Roland had signed a temporary truce with politics. The weather was delightful; the earth was breaking into sudden green; spring was triumphant; and under the influence of the country and its quiet, she confessed that she could willingly have forgotten public affairs and the disputes of men, satisfied with putting her house in order, watching her hens as they hatched their chickens, and caring for the rabbits. In Lyons it was a different matter. Misery and wealth, as they jostled each other in the town, added fresh fuel to her hatred of injustice, and all her thoughts and aspirations were fixed upon the triumph of the principles containing in them the redress of centuries of oppression.

She and her husband had become objects of suspicion to the party of reaction. A young man of Lyons—Champagneux—had started a local newspaper to which both contributed ; and when Roland offered himself as a candidate for the post of Mayor, party spirit ran high. It was not likely that Madame Roland, his wife and true comrade, would remain long buried at Le Clos, and at the end of May she was once more at Lyons and assisting at the demonstration in honour of the formation of a local federation, when fifty thousand men took the civic oath. An account of the proceedings was communicated by her to a newspaper and was widely circulated.

In the following July she first met M. Bancal des Issarts, who played an important part in her life during the coming months. The son of a manufacturer at Clermont, he had attended the local college and the University of Orleans, had filled the post of a notary for some five years in Paris, where he had become acquainted with the members of the revolutionary party, especially Brissot, Lanthenas and Bosc, had been made an elector of Paris, and had devoted himself to political and philanthropic work. One of the earliest members of the Jacobin Club, he also became a writer in Brissot's paper, the *Patriot Français*, to which he continued to contribute when, abandoning his profession, he returned to Clermont in 1790. It was some few months later that, supplied with letters of introduction from Lanthenas, he spent some days with the Rolands at Lyons, accompanying them to Le Clos for a single night before proceeding to Paris to represent Clermont at the approaching festival of Federation on July 14.

Four years older than Madame Roland, and a gentle, kindly and high-principled man, an intimacy between the two grew up with characteristic rapidity. Times of revolution, Manon wrote in one of the earliest of the long series of letters she addressed to him, were favour-



able to the swift formation of enduring ties, since at these junctures men's natures were laid bare, and the customary preliminaries of examination and investigation were rendered unnecessary. Bancal, it is true, demurred at her explanation, his protest and his anxiety to prove that the friendship was not the mere result of the Revolution calling forth an amused response from his correspondent. To whatever cause its quick development was due, it became for a time one of the absorbing interests by which Madame Roland was liable to be subjugated; and letters were constantly exchanged, sometimes dealing with personal topics, sometimes with the political situation, or, again, with the disturbed condition of Lyons and the theory that the people were deliberately incited by the Government to insurrection, with the object of gaining a pretext for quartering troops in the town for use in case of an invasion.

From Paris Bancal had written a full account of the great festival of July 14, when the federation of the entire kingdom had proclaimed the brotherhood of Frenchmen, and all orders alike, including the citizen-King—sharing for a moment in the popular enthusiasm—had sworn fidelity to the constitution which was, in the estimation of the sanguine, to prove the regeneration of France. Marie Antoinette, with her boy in her arms, made part of the show. "O my enemies—there are no longer any enemies!" Michelet's epitome of the spirit of those early days is supremely applicable to the short fervour of reconciliation, soon to become a thing of the past.

As Madame Roland read of the proceedings she longed to have been present, and provincial life did not gain by comparison. Petty dissensions, calumny, and slander were rife at Villefranche. Improbable tales were circulated and believed; and she herself was reported to have bribed the outcasts of the town to rise in revolt.

What was worse, her brother-in-law, the Canon, had lent credence to the story, and refused, in answer to her indignant protest, to own himself in the wrong.

"If I had been assured that, owing to fanaticism, you had put your brother to death," she told him, "I should at once reject the tale, notwithstanding my knowledge of your opinions."

The remonstrance was not marked by a spirit of conciliation, and the priest declined to be convicted of undue credulity. One could only answer for oneself, he told his sister-in-law, and could not always do that.

Such being the character she bore at Villefranche and Lyons—where she was so little known that her husband had often been taken for an abbé—Le Clos was a more desirable place of residence. It was pleasanter still when, towards the end of August, her new friend Bancal, accompanied by Lanthenas, came to pay a second visit, extending over some five weeks. She had looked forward to a renewal of their intercourse so eagerly as to cause her to wonder whether she had a right to the society of a man whose duty might be supposed to lie in Paris. "If I believed," she wrote on August 11, "that your journey had no other motive but to see us, I should not be without scruples. Public affairs seem to me to require as urgently as ever the eye and action of good patriots in the capital. . . . I feel this as strongly as the desire to gather our good friends around us, and these conflicting wishes would be not a little embarrassing did I not reckon in your anterior schemes and your reasons for pursuing them. Searching my conscience also, it appears to me that these reflections ought to have been present with me sooner, and I am surprised that they should have only occurred to me at the last moment, when all your arrangements are made. I almost doubt my good faith." She is sure, however, that he will have taken the interests of the country into account,



and the description of her searchings of spirit is only the preface to a lengthy discussion of affairs, public and private, written with the more openness as an opportunity had offered of sending a letter direct, instead, as was commonly the case, through some third party. "Reflecting that it is to go from us to yourself alone, I am like a schoolboy out of the beaten road."

Of course Bancal came—would have come whatever claims Paris had upon him. But the time of his visit was not alone occupied in holiday-making. Every one, Roland wrote to Bosc, was in his private workshop, writing no one knew to whom or of what. Work over, there was play. Bancal, serious-minded as he was, was induced to join in a game of battledore and shuttlecock, was taken for walks upon the wooded hillsides, and was utilised for the indoctrination of the village priest and the schoolmaster with revolutionary ideas.

Roland fully shared his wife's friendship for Bancal. "I give you no message from my friend," she had written to the latter; "we have but one soul, and what one of us says assures you of the sentiments of the other." From Roland appears to have emanated the suggestion that Bancal should make a stay of indefinite duration at Le Clos, if not take up there his permanent abode. His wife's steadfast affection, hitherto proof against the strength of any newer interest, and his confidence in her, may have blinded him now and at other times to obvious dangers. Perhaps it was to the honour of husband and wife alike that, so far as other men were concerned, he should, in Michelet's phrase, have "*un peu oublié qu'elle fût une femme.*" It might, nevertheless, have been better had he remembered it—remembering too his twenty years of seniority. In spite of her age—she was thirty-six—she had retained much of youth. In 1789 Arthur Young could still speak of her as young and beautiful; and if, as seems



clear, she had no claims to actual beauty, his description testifies to an attraction that supplied its place. Lemontey, acquainted with her in pre-revolutionary days, also fell under her charm, including in the picture he paints her beautiful figure, hair, and eyes ; the freshness of her colouring and a combination of reserve and frankness making her look singularly young. Lacking, in his opinion, the ease and grace of a Parisian, she had nothing of awkwardness, and talked well—too well, indeed, Lemontey declared—though nothing was laboured and all unstudied. The effect she produced on men of all kinds in Paris was soon to be seen ; yet Roland, in spite of his own love, seems never to have taken into account the dangerous attraction she might possess for others, or the chance that—honour, high principle, devotion to duty notwithstanding—the attraction might be mutual. His former suggestion that Lanthenas should make his home at Le Clos was followed by a proposal that Bancal should do likewise.

“Come, my friend,” he wrote. “Why delay ? You have seen our frank and open ways. It is not at my age that a man who has never varied changes. . . . We preach patriotism ; we lift up the soul. The doctor [Lanthenas] carries on his profession. My wife is the apothecary of the sick of the district. You and I will attend to business.”

Another scheme of a common existence had been started by Lanthenas, Brissot, and others. Why should not they, with the Rolands and Bancal, acquire some of the confiscated church property, to be had cheap, and live a community life adapted to minister to the regeneration of mankind ? Bancal fell eagerly in with the suggestion—very likely to commend itself to the unpractical idealists of the day ; and it was probably in reply to a letter from him on the subject that Madame Roland replied in one characterised by Michelet as “adorablement imprudent.”

It is manifest that she had been startled by the proposal, more swift to grasp its bearings and dangers than either husband or friend.

“Why are my eyes darkened with tears that fall only to reappear?” she wrote. “My will is upright; my heart is pure; and I am not at ease. ‘It would be the great charm of our life, and we should not be useless to our fellow-men,’ you say of the affection uniting us. And these comforting words have not restored peace to me.’ And why? Because she was not assured of Bancal’s happiness and feared he might connect it with a forbidden hope. True, the affection of kindred spirits should give new value to life—to this rock she clings in the storm. But a reaction, the result of emotional excitement, might follow. . . . Yet is she not, after all, wrong? Would Bancal not be superior to danger? The idea of his strength lends her strength, and she is ready to taste of the felicity offered her by Heaven.

What her feelings in truth were for Bancal, what his were for her, must remain uncertain. The most likely theory is that the friendship was strongly coloured with sentiment on either side. Writing to him three or four months later, she shows plainly how intimate was the nature of the tie cemented in those few summer weeks. She had not spent the time of his absence, she then told Bancal, without committing to paper divers things intended for his eye, to be seen by him in due course, since she had indulged no thought unworthy to be entertained by her, or known by him. When deeming herself for some moments dying, she had taken steps to ensure their reaching him. “The twilight of the tomb conduces more to truth than the dazzling brilliance of the sun.”

All things considered, it was fortunate that the experiment of a community life was not destined to be tried. By November 1790 Bancal had decided to pay a visit to London, with the object apparently of establishing

there a species of propaganda, and perhaps of studying the working of free institutions ; the Rolands' plans were likewise altered, and schemes for the future were necessarily postponed. The friendship with Bancal, under these circumstances, went the way of most intimacies of the kind. The correspondence between him and Madame Roland was carried on at first with an enthusiasm somewhat diminished by the lapse of time, a change passing over it as the months went by. "All unspontaneous ; at a distance interest does not remain the same. Her correspondence languishes"—such was the commentary inscribed upon one of her letters by Madame Roland's absent friend. Perhaps, too, the right of free speech she always claimed is more safely exercised when proximity, the softening effect of face and voice, ensure to it forgiveness, and reproof or blame are less easily digested when administered by post.

"What ! you—you too would seek consolation [from political disappointment] in distraction ?" she wrote in January 1791. "Is that the conduct of a patriot ?" and he was stirred to hot indignation when, repeating the opinion of some of his comrades that Bancal, required in Paris, was mistaken in lingering on in England, she expressed her personal conviction that he had had the will (*voulu*) as much as any man to serve his country.

"*Voulu* ! what an expression !" he again added to her letter, underlining the offensive phrase. Was he, after all he had done and suffered in the cause of liberty, to be credited with no more than the will to be of service !

No breach took place, the friendship finding by degrees its proper level, and naturally proving less absorbing on the woman's side amid the fresh interests and excitement of the life upon which she was soon to enter. The episode, though ephemeral in its more emotional phase, nevertheless points to a change in Madame Roland. It serves to indicate the approach of a day when husband and child might not suffice, as



heretofore, to constitute her world, and the existence she had found so satisfying to heart and soul would seem lacking in some of the elements she desired. It is true that in a letter of this date she could still write, with undoubted sincerity, that it would be enough for her could she contribute to the happiness of a sage, be the comfort of good people, and gather some flowers of friendship. Yet at the stage she had reached, keenly open to impressions from without, whether private or public, and increasingly conscious of her powers of persuasion and influence, it is difficult to believe that she would have continued content to remain permanently at a distance from the scene of action and occupied alone with the programme she had traced.

Other facts may have helped to detach her from the purely domestic life she had been leading. For some years after Eudora's birth the child had filled a place in her mother's thoughts scarcely less than that assigned to Roland himself. But Eudora was destined to prove a disappointment, and the hopes entertained concerning her were already undergoing revision. As may chance more frequently than parents are willing to admit, the natures of child and mother were unsympathetic; and Madame Roland, clear-sighted in spite of her love, was painfully awakening to the consciousness of it. She was also becoming aware that the conditions of her life, as Roland's companion and fellow-labourer, made it difficult for her to do her duty by her little daughter. Was what was lacking in Eudora to be laid to the charge of a faulty system of education? she had speculated anxiously in a letter to Roland belonging to the year 1787. Had she departed too far from the rules laid down by Rousseau? had she exacted a degree of study and application the child had not to bestow? If Eudora displayed none of the tastes and inclinations her parents would have desired to see, were they not perhaps to blame for having failed

to inspire them. She resolved, for her part, to amend her ways, never to display anger or impatience, and if punishment should be necessary, to administer it as calmly and coldly as if she were justice itself. Her object should be, in spite of the difficulties interposed by her work, to strive to render the child happier with her than with any other person, and when collaborating with her husband in his literary labours, she would seek to impose none of the restraints hard to bear upon a child's natural tendency to noise and interruption.

The rules were doubtless salutary ; but results do not invariably correspond with the pains taken to produce them, and a letter to Lavater in the course of the following year sounds a note of defeat. "Teach me," Madame Roland begged the philosopher, "to conquer and direct an indocile nature, a *trempe insouciante*, over which gentle caresses, like firmness and privations, have little power. This is my daily torment. Education—a task so dear to a mother who loves her child—appears to be the hardest trial I am to undergo." An extreme lightness of mind, fickleness, wilfulness, frustrated all efforts to establish a solid basis. In 1789 it appears that the attempt, so far as Madame Roland was personally concerned, had been abandoned. Partly no doubt owing to the limited accommodation supplied by the small apartment in Lyons, where the summer was spent, but partly, one imagines, by reason of her mother's failure to cope with the child's wayward will, Eudora was entrusted to the care of a Dr. Frossard, a Protestant minister in the town. That the experiment was unsuccessful is to be inferred from a letter to Bosc, of June 1790, breathing the same spirit of despondency as before. "I should speak more of Eudora were I less occupied with her," the mother wrote. "I am clever enough at guiding sentiment ; but I cannot give birth to it in a cold heart. This coldness disconcerts me—me and my method. I know not what hold is to



be obtained over a brain which is never concentrated, and a character that nothing affects."

A further experiment was to be tried upon the victim of educational theories, and, withdrawn from the care of the Protestant minister, Eudora was assigned to that of the nuns of the Visitation at Villefranche. Her mother may have been right in relinquishing the endeavour to reconcile her duties as Roland's collaborator with personal supervision of her child; but a letter to Bancal shows that the decision had cost her a struggle, and for the first time a complaint as to the conditions of life necessitating it finds utterance.

"This fresh separation," she wrote, "brings again before me with bitterness all the reasons making it needful, and my heart is torn. . . . What is the care of suckling one's child compared with the formation of its heart? The first was so dear to me that I would have bought it with all my being and paid for it with my life. Why cannot I give myself up to the other?" Men were not born to be writers, but citizens and fathers; women were not made to share all the pursuits of men. Happy those whose duties did not clash, and who were not forced to sacrifice some of them to others.

By the end of the year Eudora was to be at a greater distance from her parents. In the meantime Lyons was not an agreeable place of residence. Full of dissension and conflict, distrust reigned between class and class; and belonging by birth to the *noblesse*, by sympathy to the people, Roland had enemies in all parties. With regard to calumnies spread concerning herself, Madame Roland desired no refutation to be made—"Justifier une femme, c'est presque toujours la compromettre," she wrote. She felt, however, that measures should be taken to disprove the charges directed against Roland. In the end his uprightness, industry, and just dealing obtained recognition, nor could the town afford to refuse to avail



itself of the services of a man of tried and practical ability and integrity. Though not without opposition, he was made a member of the municipality of Lyons—a democratic, though by no means revolutionary body—and when the town, deeply in debt and urgently requiring assistance, resolved to send a representative to Paris to solicit aid from the Constituent Assembly, the choice fell upon Roland. It was determined that his wife should accompany him, and Bosc, enchanted with the prospect of renewed intercourse with his friends, was entrusted with the task of finding them lodgings. He selected an apartment in the Hôtel Britannique in the rue Guénégaud, and before the end of February 1791 they had taken possession of it, and Madame Roland was studying the Revolution at close quarters.

## CHAPTER XIII

Visit to revolutionary Paris—First impressions—Madame Roland's *salon*—Her opinion of Robespierre—Buzot—Madame Roland at the conferences of the leaders—Mirabeau's death—The flight to Varennes—Massacre of the Champs de Mars—End of Roland's mission.

IT is not difficult to imagine the interest with which Madame Roland took up her residence in Paris. The party consisted, besides herself and her husband, of a colleague associated with Roland in his official work, of whom little is heard, of a man- and maidservant, and lastly of Lanthenas, who in spite of Madame Roland's refusal to accept him as a permanent inmate, was at present a member of the household. The absence of Eudora, at her convent school at Villefranche, it was true, left a blank. Whatever might be her little daughter's shortcomings, the mother felt the separation keenly, and before she had been a month in Paris she declared herself ready to leave it, confessing that the child was a powerful magnet attracting her home. Other reasons were not wanting that would have reconciled her—or so she imagined—to a return to Le Clos and provincial life.

"I have embraced my relations. I have seen my native place once more. I am ready to go back without regret to the depths of the country. It seems to me that the days spent at my hermitage, as each one draws to an end, leave my conscience more certain of having used them for the good of my fellows than those I pass here. The retreat where I dwell, so to speak, with

my heart, is preferable to a place where the mind alone is at work."

Whether or not she was right in believing that she would have been content to resume the daily routine of life in the Beaujolais—and the sequel goes far to prove that she was mistaken—the days of which she spoke, of quiet and retirement, were nearly run out. Her lines were for the future to be cast elsewhere, in the midst of the whirling, eddying life of Paris.

In spite of passing regrets, she had thrown herself eagerly into all that was going on around her. On her first arrival she had found a charm in revisiting the places associated with her youth, and had been glad to renew her intercourse with the relations that remained. The present was nevertheless too full of interest and excitement not to throw the past and its memories into the background. She was making acquaintance with the practical working of the Revolution, was bringing her shrewd powers of observation to bear upon the men hitherto known only to her by name, and was assisting at the debates in the Assembly with enthusiasm indeed—had she not been a patriot already, she said, the Assembly would have made her one—but with an enthusiasm soon to be tempered by discrimination and criticism.

"I saw the powerful Mirabeau, the amazing Cazalés, the audacious Maury, the astute Lameths, the cold Barnave; I observed with vexation, on the part of the *noirs*, the species of superiority conferred in such assemblies by the habit of representation, by purity of language and by distinction of manners. But force of reasoning, the courage of uprightness, the illumination of philosophy, acquaintance with official works and the ease learnt at the Bar, should ensure the triumph of the patriots of the Left, were all of them pure, and could they remain united."

The last words suppose a state of affairs difficult



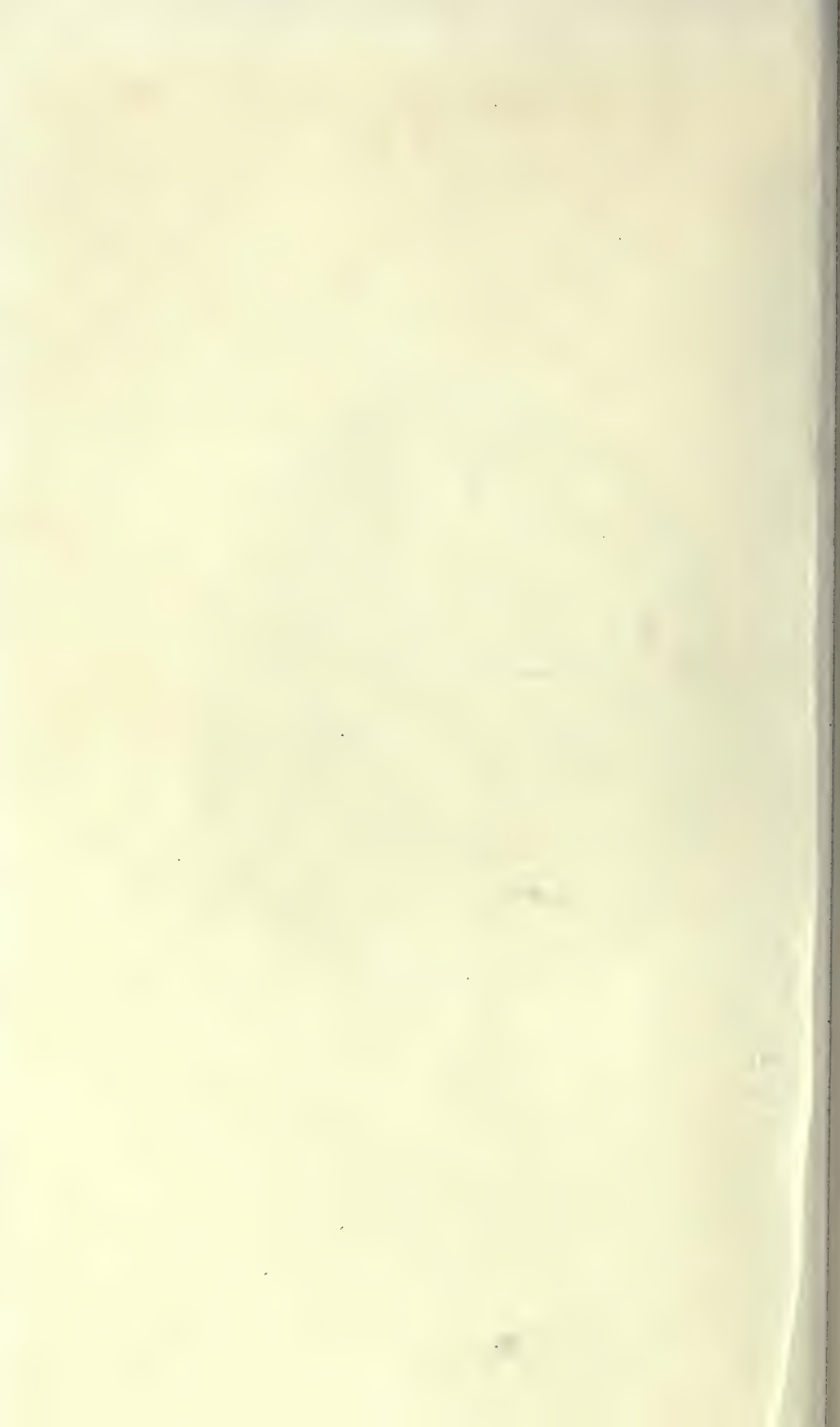
at all times to bring about, and in the fluid condition of the revolutionary parties of the day, impossible. Of those who were to render her aspirations vain and to wreck the cause she had at heart, no critic was to prove more severe and uncompromising than the woman who now gazed around her with dazzled eyes "witnessing the liberty of her country and admiring every proof of it."

She was soon brought into intimate and personal relations with the revolutionary leaders. During the spring and summer months passed in Paris she was vindicating her claim to be regarded as a person of importance to the party with which she was in sympathy, nor was it long before her salon in the Hôtel Britannique became a political centre. Men who had been to her no more than representatives of principles stood before her in flesh and blood. With Brissot—"the least Brissotin," as his comrades would say, "of all possible Brissotins"—she had already corresponded, and there was an additional interest in comparing the leader of the Gironde as she came to know him with the conception she had formed of the revolutionary writer and propagandist. In some respects the result of the comparison was, as such comparisons are apt to be, disappointing. Curly-headed, gay, naïf, and as ingenuous as a boy of fifteen, he seemed to her made to live with the wise and to be the dupe of the bad. Though she liked the simplicity of his manners, there was a levity about him incompatible with the weight of a philosopher. A student of social problems and of the means of producing happiness, he was, she observed, a good judge of man, and totally ignorant of men. Recognising the existence of vice, he was incapable of believing in the wickedness of any individual with whom he was brought into personal contact. This was her shrewd estimate of the editor of the *Patriot Français*



MAXIMILIEN ROBESPIERRE.

From an engraving by Fiesinger.





and the *Moniteur*, and the chief of the party which was to become her own.

Through Brissot the Rolands became quickly acquainted with Pétion, like himself a native of Chartres and a member of the Constituent Assembly, who stirred Madame Roland to a degree of enthusiastic admiration that must have been inspired rather by his reputation as an uncompromising extremist than by any personal charm. Other introductions followed, and it was arranged that meetings of like-minded men should take place four times a week in the Rolands' apartments, occupying a convenient central position. The gatherings were held between the rising of the Assembly and the evening meetings at the Jacobin Club, Pétion, Brissot, Clavière, Robespierre, Buzot, and of course Lanthenas and Bosc, being the guests most regular in their attendance, with others frequently added to the number.

Of the most notorious of the group, as he showed himself in the intimacy of these informal conferences, his hostess has left a graphic picture. Robespierre, she says, spoke little, often sneered, gave utterance to a few sarcasms, and never offered an opinion. Listening to the discussions carried on, he would make use, at the Assembly next day, of what had been said and the arguments put forward; excusing himself lightly when his conduct was made the subject of gentle reproach by his comrades. He was, in Madame Roland's opinion, a man upon whom it was impossible to reckon. His self-love might lead him at any moment to act independently of his colleagues, in order to obtain the personal credit of an achievement or a successful stroke of policy. In these early days, however, she was not disposed to judge him otherwise than indulgently. He loved liberty, and she ascribed his errors to excess of zeal, his want of candour and openness to timidity.

Amongst the members of the party who constantly met at the Hôtel Britannique, one was to become of supreme importance in the short space of life remaining to the hostess. This was Buzot. Of him as he appeared to her she has left a detailed portrait. Proud and courageous, ardent, melancholy, and indolent, his character was made up of extremes. A passionate lover of nature and imbued with the principles of philosophy, he seemed formed for a life of domestic happiness—he would have forgotten the universe in intercourse with a heart worthy of his own. Having thrown himself into public life, he was austere just, easily roused to indignation by injustice, and would make no compromise with crime. Unlike Brissot, he was the friend of humanity at large, but severe in his judgments of individuals and made few friends. Such was the man whom, as we now know, Manon, before her death, so passionately loved. Born in 1760, and six years younger than herself, he had married, some seven years earlier, a cousin, plain and somewhat deformed; with whom—though considering her below her husband's level—Madame Roland was at this time on friendly and even cordial terms. It was not possible that the intimacy should last, and after the termination of the Rolands' present visit to Paris, the two scarcely met.

The gatherings at the Hôtel Britannique were a tribute and a testimony to the attraction exercised by a woman who, neither as wife to a provincial official nor by virtue of her antecedents, would have naturally occupied a position of influence or prominence. Madame Roland was in fact come into her kingdom—a kingdom she had won for herself by means of a charm which was eminently personal. To the student of her life and her writings, her rare intellectual gifts, her powers of language and thought, her sagacity and penetration, her genuine kindness, strong principles, and uprightness



are all apparent. Her charm must be sought—and found—in its effect upon others. From the early days in the rue de l'Horloge onwards men of all kinds had been drawn to her, had sought her society, her never-failing sympathy, and so it continued until the end. She had the talent of transmuting the copper coinage of common intercourse into something very like gold; for friendship she had a genius. "I know not what friendship is for many who talk of it—in my eyes it is the sweetest sentiment that can bind hearts together," she once wrote, and she was always faithful to her ideal.

There was another fact to which her success may have been in part due. If she was in some respects masculine, more especially in respect to intellectual attainments, she was careful to keep, so far as the public was concerned, in the background, and to emphasise and accentuate her womanhood. In the same way that, as a girl and with the instincts of the writer abnormally developed, she had shrunk from the very idea of publication, so now that her initiation into practical politics, as distinct from political dreams, was taking place, she was heedful to abstain from putting herself forward, working, as undoubtedly she did work, behind the scenes.

Her views upon the position of women were, as before, strongly defined. "I knew the rôle becoming to my sex, and I never departed from it." Always present at the conferences held in her salon, never losing a word of what was said, inwardly by turns approving, impatient, or critical, she had the strength of mind to maintain the attitude of a simple listener—perhaps of a learner—as, withdrawn from the group of speakers, she stitched at her needlework or wrote letters, repressing, though with difficulty, her desire to intervene in the lengthy discussions of good and wise men whose ears she confessed she would have liked to box. When it is remembered that she was by common consent one of the best talkers of her



day, the self-restraint exercised becomes the more remarkable.

Yet she estimated at its full value a woman's power, and her self-effacement, if owing in part to taste, may also have been the result of policy. If she had no desire to forfeit her influence by competing with men on their own ground, it cannot be doubted that she felt that the time might come when she too would have a share in directing the course of the current. Was not the very presence of the revolutionary leaders in her house a sign of it? Was not one of those who took counsel there the husband who leant so securely upon her judgment? Had it not been since he had become acquainted with her that Buzot, hitherto almost silent in the Assembly, had been transformed into one of its most active members? Were not all the men present brought together in some measure by the influence of the woman who took no overt part in their deliberations?

The Rolands' first visit to revolutionary Paris was to last over seven months. It may be regarded as in a sense the beginning of the end. Had it not come to break the routine of life at Lyons, Villefranche, and Le Clos, it is conceivable that Madame Roland's days would have continued to be spent in patient toil only redeemed from drudgery by affection and in the tranquil practice of the domestic virtues. Having once shared in the vivid existence of Paris, a return to that past was hardly possible. From occupying the position of a mere spectator of the great drama that was in course of being enacted, she was transferred suddenly to the very centre of the whirlpool, where she participated in the hopes and fears, the triumphs and disappointments, the excitement and the discouragement of each succeeding day. In her presence occurrences stirring the imagination of the whole civilised world and affecting the destinies of generations unborn were discussed

by the makers of history who met under her roof. She had found her feet in a new environment. The nature of the change that was wrought in her the future was to show.

The Rolands had reached Paris at a critical moment. Not two months later came the death of Mirabeau, in whom alone had lain the hope of moribund royalty. Madame Roland had barely had an opportunity of listening to the eloquence of "the one man of the Revolution whose genius could direct men, and give the motive impulse to an Assembly; great by his gifts, little by his vices; but ever superior to the common crowd and certain of the mastery when he would take the trouble to command." Thus she wrote of the leader whom all France united to mourn, and many must have been the discussions in the rue Guenégand as to who was to fill the place he left vacant. As Madame Roland became better acquainted with the materials making up the party to which she belonged, disappointment was her dominant sentiment. In a mood of special discouragement she wrote to Bancal that she saw in the Assembly not a single man belonging to the Left uniting to an ardent love of goodness courage to stand against the storm, adding that the best amongst the patriots were more occupied with personal fame than with the great interests of the country—they were all men of mediocrity, even with regard to talent. They had cleverness; not *l'âme*.

The Constituent Assembly in fact pleased her, as she became acquainted with it, as a whole not at all; and when, on April 28, it decreed that only citizens *actifs* had the right to be enrolled in the National Guard—thus excluding the poorer classes—her indignation knew no bounds, and found vent in a letter to Brissot, published in the *Patriot Français*.

"I watched to-day that Assembly which cannot be called National. It is hell itself with all its horrors; reason, truth, justice, are there stifled, dishonoured, despised. . . . My heart is torn. I vowed this morning to return no more to that abominable den where justice and humanity are derided."

"Must one only learn to despise men the more one watches them?" she afterwards asked sadly in reference to the Jacobin Club, which had also failed to realise her expectations. She was beginning throughout that summer to acknowledge that liberty and regeneration might only be purchased by blood, and that the calamity of civil war itself would be "a great school of public virtues." More clear-sighted than those who believed that the work was done and looked forward with confidence to the future, she foresaw a coming crisis, confessing that it might be more salutary than none at all.

At Easter came the object-lesson on the King's position supplied by the frustration of his attempt to spend the festival at Saint-Cloud. The fact that he was no longer a free agent was made plain. Lastly, the flight to Varennes brought matters to a climax. "Voilà la guerre déclarée," was Madame Roland's comment upon it in one of the letters to Bancal which kept him informed of what was going on. The escape of Louis and his family appeared to her, during the brief space when it seemed to have been effected, far from a misfortune, provided energy and good sense were brought to bear upon the situation, provided also that those who dealt with it were united. The people—Madame Roland's trust in the people was still strong—took a just view of what had happened, and the word "republic" was everywhere uttered.

Yet it was as considering themselves "under the knife" that the leaders of her party, and she with them,



met that afternoon at the house of Pétion to consult how best the public safety was to be secured ; how each, before losing his life, could best serve the common cause. As Madame Roland watched those thus gathered together she was struck by the alarm displayed by Robespierre. In his opinion, the action of the King portended a conspiracy in the capital ; he apprehended a general massacre, and did not expect to live another four-and-twenty hours. Pétion and Brissot, on the contrary, held that the King had ruined his chances by flight. The Court was shown in its true colours, and it was made plain that Louis did not intend to adhere to the oath he had sworn to the Constitution. Now was the moment to prepare the minds of the people for the Republic.

“ Robespierre, sneering as usual, and biting his nails, asked what a Republic was ? ”

His fears were quickly allayed. In the arrest of the royal family, regretted by his colleagues as a return to the former state of things, he saw safety. Whether for good or ill, the King was to remain in Paris. The question to be considered was what course was now to be pursued. The Assembly could not be trusted to take the strong measures considered necessary by the party of progress. The future was uncertain, and the general excitement is reflected in Madame Roland's bulletins to Bancal. “ As long as there was peace,” she wrote, “ I adhered to a pacific rôle and to the exercise of the influence which seemed to belong to my sex. When the departure of the King declared war, it appeared to me that every one should give themselves up unreservedly, and I went to be enrolled in the National Societies. . . . I cannot stay at home, and am going to visit the good people I know, in order that we may all be stimulated to action.”

By July 1 she was forced to confess that the opportunity had been lost. “ We have let slip the fairest

opening for liberty . . . but the future is big with events. We are only beginning the Revolution, and are on the eve of a fresh crisis."

The Cordelier Club had been first in the field in demanding that either Louis should be tried as a traitor or that the country should be invited to pronounce sentence upon him. The question was debated in the Assembly, the Right maintaining the inviolability of the Sovereign, whilst Buzot took a prominent part in supporting the views held, with the Left, by Madame Roland. The Jacobins had followed on the same lines as the Cordeliers, and when, on the evening of July 15, the proposal for the King's trial was moved in the Club, she was present and listened to the exhortation addressed to all patriots to resort on the morrow to the Champs de Mars for the purpose of signing the petition in favour of Louis' *déchéance*. She was likewise at the Champs de Mars the next morning, when the announcement was made that, the Assembly having already determined upon its course of action and the victory of the anti-republican party being won, the petition was withdrawn. It was not to be expected that the mob would accept the decree without resistance. All was in confusion and uncertainty. "I could not paint to you our present condition," wrote Madame Roland to Bancal on Sunday the 17th. "I feel as if surrounded by a silent horror—the heart settled into a solemn and melancholy calm, ready to sacrifice all rather than cease to defend principles, but ignorant of the moment of their triumph and with the single resolve to set a great example."

The immediate result of what had been done was soon seen. On the same day that the letter was written crowds resorted to the Champs de Mars, there to affix their signatures to a petition by which the one withdrawn by the Jacobins had been replaced; the people

and the troops commanded by Lafayette came into collision, and what was called the massacre of the Champs de Mars was the result.

Details as to one of the most familiar landmarks of the advancing tide of revolution are unnecessary. The official party, responsible for the bloodshed, counted the number of the dead at twelve ; the popular estimate raised it to hundreds. Panic prevailed. The leaders of the Left imagined themselves to be in danger. Desmoulins, Fréron, Marat—all journalists—disappeared, even Danton vanished. Roland, level-headed as he was, shared the alarm of the moment, and was as exaggerated in his account of what had taken place as others. People, according to him, were imprisoned by hundreds ; a foreign war was imminent ; “there is nothing but treason, lies, poison. . . . There were hundreds of deaths at the Champs de Mars : husbands killed their wives ; relations, relations ; friends, friends. St. Bartholomew, the Dragonnades, were not more horrible.”

Robespierre remained in Paris, in a condition of terror again described by Madame Roland. “I know no horror comparable to that of Robespierre under these circumstances,” she wrote. “His trial was, in truth, spoken of, probably in order to intimidate him. It was reported that a plot was hatching at the Feuillants”—the new moderate club recently started by the Lameths and others as a rival to the Jacobins—“against him and those who had shared in drawing up the Jacobin petition. Roland and I indeed felt uneasy on his account. We went at eleven o’clock at night to offer him shelter ; but he had quitted his domicile. We then went to Buzot, to say that, without abandoning the Jacobins, he would do well to join the Feuillants, to find out what was going on and to be ready to defend the objects of persecution. Buzot hesitated for some time. ‘I would do everything to



save that unfortunate young man,' he said, speaking of Robespierre, 'though I am far from sharing the opinion entertained of him by some people. He thinks too much of himself to love liberty so well; but he serves it, and that is enough for me. Nevertheless, the public must come first. It would be inconsistent with my principles, and would produce a false impression, were I to resort to the Feuillants. I dislike a rôle which would give me two faces. . . . Nothing can be done against Robespierre without action on the part of the Assembly. I shall always be there to defend him.' He added that although hitherto he had seldom frequented the Jacobins, the kind of thing, more especially in noisy gatherings, being repulsive to him, he should attend the club regularly so long as a persecution directed against a society useful to the cause of liberty lasted."

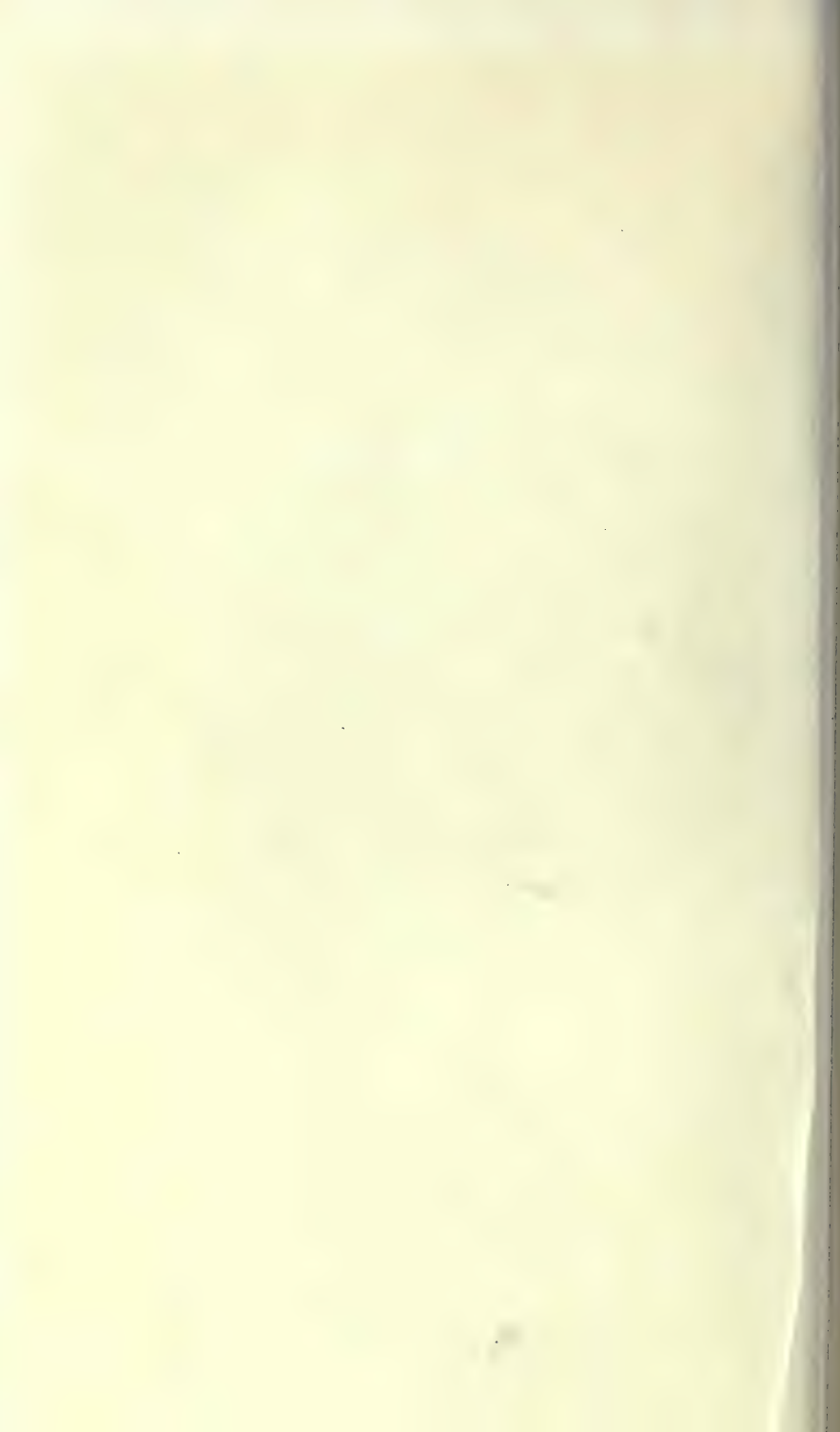
The words, Madame Roland observes, paint Buzot well; and for that reason and because he was the man who was destined to win—if he had not already won—her heart, his answer is given at length. It has been suggested that Buzot—at thirty-one—was not unlike a younger Roland; and there is something in his attitude at this juncture that lends colour to the assertion. Upright, disinterested, calm and, at a moment of excitement and ferment, capable of weighing arguments and trying conclusions, with a suspicion of the superior person and the pedant about him, it is perhaps strange that, out of all the men with whom she was brought into daily contact, it should have been Buzot whom Madame Roland, hot-hearted, impulsive, and vehement, should have singled out to love with all the passion of which she was capable.

Madame Roland had spent the evening of July 17—the day of the struggle on the Champs de Mars—at the Jacobins, where she found a species of panic prevailing.



FRANÇOIS BUZOT.

From an engraving by Baudran.





The hall was reported to be surrounded, and she herself expelled, by making him ashamed of his terror, a man who had taken refuge in the women's gallery. When she returned, at eleven at night, to the Hôtel Britannique, she found her apartment occupied by a couple of uninvited guests—M. Robert, editor of the *Mercure National*, and his wife, also a journalist, a daughter of Guynement de Kéralio. Madame Roland knew them only slightly ; but their presence was soon explained. Belonging to the advanced section of the revolutionary party, Robert had been one of the earliest advocates of a republic, and, a marked man, had taken a conspicuous part in the proceedings on the Champs de Mars. Accosting her with the confidence of an old friend, Madame Robert announced to the involuntary hostess, with compliments as to her character and patriotism, that, afraid either to go to their lodging or to the houses of those known to be their associates, she and her husband had come to beg for shelter.

Madame Roland, whilst thanking the refugees for the confidence placed in her, and declaring herself honoured in affording an asylum to the victims of persecution, pointed out that the retreat was ill-chosen. The hôtel was much frequented, and the landlord a strong partisan of Lafayette. The Roberts persisting in their demand for hospitality, if but for a single night, she made arrangements for their accommodation. When on the morrow they not only displayed themselves on the balcony, but invited a noisy newsvendor of their acquaintance who passed below to come up and discuss the events of the previous day, Madame Roland's patience began to give way ; and when Vachard, the newcomer, was heard loudly boasting of the feats he had performed, including the sabring of a national guard, she felt it was time to warn her guests that though she had opened her house to them, she could not receive acquaintances cal-

culated to compromise her habitual visitors. Vachard was accordingly dismissed, and by the afternoon she had succeeded in disembarassing herself of the Roberts themselves; Madame Robert adorned with feathers and rouge, and her husband in a sky-blue coat upon which his hair descended in black curls and with a sword at his side, by no means wearing the appearance of a couple anxious to escape notice. It was with unfeigned satisfaction that Madame Roland received their farewells.

During the remaining weeks of the Rolands' visit to Paris the completion of the constitution occupied the Assembly, by this time on the eve of dispersing. A revision of the whole had been in contemplation, but it was manifest that it would have been difficult to carry it out at a moment of excitement and in the teeth of the warring influences at work, when the members of each party were regarded with fierce suspicion by the rest. As Buzot and Pétion came home, late and weary, one evening from the Assembly, the latter sat playing with a puppy upon the ottoman, until, man and dog alike tired out, the two fell asleep together. Buzot laughed as he pointed to them.

"Look at that *factieux*," he said. "They glanced askance at us as we left the hall; and our accusers, excited on behalf of their party, imagine that we are carrying on intrigues."

It was as extremists of the republican party that the two were under suspicion. The time was not far off when, stigmatised as traitors to the Revolution, they would be flying for their lives.

To them, as to Madame Roland, the constitution to be presented to the King appeared no better than a compromise, arrived at by means of the coalition between the moderates and the nobles. "Only a small number of men," she wrote, "dared to fight for principles;

and in the end these were reduced to Buzot, Pétion, and Robespierre."

In the meantime Roland's mission had been accomplished. He had obtained for Lyons what it had instructed him to solicit, and in September he was ready to turn his face homewards, and to superintend the vintage of Le Clos.



## CHAPTER XIV

A new friend—Quarrel with Bosc—Return to Le Clos—Madame Grandchamp's visit—Madame Roland discontented—Eudora.

BEFORE the Rolands had returned to the country and resumed—as it was to prove, for no more than a few months—the routine of life in the Beaujolais, Madame Roland had made a new friend. It has been seen that since her estrangement from the Cannets there had been no trace of any intimacy with a woman, nor does she appear to have formed close ties with the wives of the men with whom she associated in Paris. If a community of interests brought her and Madame Buzot together for a time, the connection was not lasting. For Madame Pétion, afterwards her fellow-captive, she seems to have had a kindly liking, but no more ; and Brissot's wife, whom she allowed to possess strength of character and good sense, was absorbed in household cares, ironed her husband's shirts, and personally inspected her guests through the keyhole before admitting them. Bosc and Lanthenas, her most constant companions, were unmarried.

Before the move to the country had been made, she had, however, with characteristic rapidity, formed a sudden friendship which, with its note of exaggeration, almost recalls the early days in the convent garden where she and Sophi efirst met.

There was a Madame Grandchamp—also a Sophie—a friend of Bosc's, to whom he had described the Rolands,

announcing with delight in February 1791 their approaching visit to Paris, Madame Grandchamp taking it for granted that he would lose no time in presenting her to the woman who had been the subject of his enthusiastic praise. Her anticipations were not realised. It may be that he thought, not unwisely, that friends, however true, are best kept apart—nor was it until the middle of August that he one day invited Madame Grandchamp to accompany him and the Rolands to a meeting of the Jacobin Club. Wounded pride dictated a refusal, but self-respect yielded to curiosity ; she decided to condone the lack of cordiality he had displayed, and permitted him to take her to his friends' apartment.

"Here is an Athenian," he said, in the language of the day, "whom I present to a Spartan."

Madame Roland, in an amazon dress, her black hair cut short *en jokei*, her colour bright, her eyes at once gentle and penetrating, welcomed her guest ; and the evening spent together at the Jacobins was long remembered by Madame Grandchamp, her reminiscences proving that it was not alone for men that Manon possessed attraction. When they parted, Sophie went so far as to regret that the long-deferred introduction had taken place, since she could not always enjoy the company of her new acquaintance.

Disappointment followed on this beginning. Two attempts made by Madame Grandchamp to find Madame Roland at home were unsuccessful ; and admitted on the third occasion, she was received with constraint and embarrassment. Others were present, notably Roland himself, tall and spare, his refined, intellectual countenance seeming to the guest to express causticity and contempt. Madame Grandchamp was not encouraged to repeat her visit, and was the more surprised when one morning Madame Roland, coming to her house, greeted her with effusion.

"You will have condemned me," she said. "I am aware that appearances are against me. I could not explain"—it is probable that Madame Grandchamp had been admitted by accident to a political conference—"this is the first moment I have had at my disposal, and I have come to justify myself, to make myself known. Our souls are *en rapport*—we must love each other."

The two became friends on the spot. But how was the friendship to be developed? The Rolands were on the eve of leaving Paris. What time remained to cement the tie? Madame Roland was, however, a woman of resource. Why, she asked, should not Madame Grandchamp accompany her to Le Clos? and when, amongst other objections, her astonished acquaintance suggested that Roland might not fall in with the plan, his wife, whilst frankly allowing that this was possible, explained that he was detained in Paris for three weeks, that he would, moreover, call on Madame Grandchamp the next day, and that she was confident as to the result. When, in fact, Roland corroborated the invitation given by his wife, Madame Grandchamp allowed her misgivings to be overcome, and it was arranged that the two women should start together for the Beaujolais on September 3.

The concluding days of Madame Roland's stay in Paris were marked by a passage of arms with the faithful Bosc. In the group surrounding the Rolands the cult of friendship was carried to an inconvenient and exacting height, an offence, though slight, against the strictness of its code coming near—even in days when men might have been supposed to be engrossed in the stress and strain of the political situation—to assuming the proportions of a tragedy. Unusually sensitive, Bosc had on the present occasion been deeply wounded by the fact that he had not been informed of Madame Grandchamp's proposed visit to Le Clos. He had apparently made



known his sentiments on the subject to Madame Roland ; and in a letter, dated 11 p.m. on the day preceding that fixed for her journey, she made answer to the reproaches he had addressed to her accompanied by the intimation that, under the circumstances, he should not come, according to promise, to make his adieus.

The explanation of the silence he so bitterly resented was simple. Bosc himself having made no mention of the plan, she had imagined that Madame Grandchamp had her reasons for concealing it, concluding that she was contriving a surprise for him when he should come to take leave of his friend. "I had made a charming picture," wrote Madame Roland, "of what we should feel, share, and express to-morrow evening ; and it is when my heart was nourishing the sweetest affection that you imagine it deficient in that trust without which friendship does not exist," entreating him not to adhere to his determination of allowing her to depart with no farewell taken.

Bosc remained obdurate ; and on the following day another long letter, written at 2 p.m., describes how, weary with preparations for departure and with little leisure, Madame Roland had sought him in vain both at his office and at his lodgings, so that she might not carry away the grief of leaving him in his present state of mind. A friend had at least the right—granted by the law to the guilty—of a hearing. After which she enters at length into the subject of her rapid intimacy with Madame Grandchamp, with fresh explanations of the silence he resented. "Adieu, mon ami, mon fils," she concludes—"you will ever remain both."

The incident is too characteristic of the terms upon which Madame Roland stood with her friends, and the importance attached on both sides to trifles, to be omitted. Whatever might be the exigencies of public life, the immense interests at stake, the details of personal inter-

course never lost for her their place or importance, exaggerated in the present instance to the verge of caricature.

Forgiven or not, the two friends set out on their journey to the Beaujolais on the evening of September 3, room having been made for Madame Grandchamp in the crowded diligence by the exclusion of a maid.

The interval spent by Madame Roland mainly at Le Clos before her final return to Paris in December, is like an interlude in the melodrama into which her life was fast resolving itself. If echoes of Parisian excitement reached her, they were inevitably dulled by distance, and in the stillness of the country other interests, the local affairs of the province, the domestic duties of Le Clos, above all, the consideration of the development—or non-development—of little Eudora, reasserted their sway.

Tired and worn out with her journey—she had been unwell before leaving Paris—she found Villefranche *en fête*, every one at a fair in the neighbourhood, and her brother-in-law, the Canon, ready to welcome her, having returned from a health cure for that purpose. Eudora, too, at the convent to which she had been relegated, was impatiently awaiting her mother's arrival and received her with such transports of delight, sobbing with joy, that Madame Roland did not so much as venture to say that she had contemplated leaving her at the convent until the following day, but carried the child off forthwith. Yet Eudora—poor Eudora—was still, as before, a disappointment. "We must not deceive ourselves," she wrote to Roland. "Your daughter is affectionate. She loves me ; she will be gentle ; but she has not an idea, no grain of memory. She looks as if she had just left her nurse, and gives promise of no intellect. She has embroidered a workbag for me prettily, and does a little needlework ; otherwise she has developed no tastes, and I begin to believe we must not persist in

expecting much, still less in exacting it." To Bancal she wrote that the child had no desire for any knowledge save that her mother loved her, and little capacity save that of returning her love. To some mothers this would have been enough ; but that her only child should lack most of the qualities and gifts she prized was a sore trial to Madame Roland.

Whatever doubts Madame Grandchamp had entertained as to the wisdom of the experiment upon which she had entered had been quickly dispelled. Both women were flattered—the guest at the desire for her society proved by the invitation, the hostess by the fact that so long and troublesome a journey had been undertaken for her sake. Nor was Madame Grandchamp disposed to regret it. "In that wild place," she afterwards wrote, "in that profound solitude, I felt the value of intercourse with the most fascinating of women." The time slipped by with alarming rapidity ; and if, at times, the claims of home duties recurred reproachfully to her memory, in her new friend's society all else was forgotten.

On Roland's arrival the spell was broken. He wished to talk of himself and his writings ; produced the latter for Madame Grandchamp's perusal, and desired to obtain her opinion of them. The elections were going forward, and had resulted in a defeat, so far as Lyons was concerned, for the party to which he belonged ; he had decided upon a country life, and begged the guest to use her influence to reconcile his wife to the prospect. This would not be an easy task. When she had left Paris she had declared herself weary of it. After contemplating so many fools and knaves, she had longed for a sight of her trees ; but the capital gained in charm at a distance. She had become sensible of the "nullité de la province," regretted its silence and obscurity on Roland's behalf, believing public life to be more necessary to him than he knew ; and would have liked Eudora to be in



Paris. "Such is the stupidity of our only child," she told Roland frankly, "that I see no hope of making anything of her except by showing her everything possible and providing her with some object of interest." For herself, it is impossible not to feel that the atmosphere of the capital and the electric excitement pervading it had become the very breath of life. It is true that in a lengthy letter addressed from the "*fond des déserts*" to Robespierre she declared that no one who, born with a soul, had maintained it in health could have seen Paris of late without sighing over the blindness of a corrupted nation, and the abyss of ills from which it was so difficult to emerge; that her own observation had taught her that work must be performed for the good of humanity for the sole pleasure of doing it, and with no expectation of gratitude or justice; that, embracing her child, she had sworn with tears to forget politics and study nature alone, and to find, with Roland, refuge in country labours mingled with occupations belonging to the study, and to seek, in the practice of private virtues, an alleviation for public misfortunes. She was probably quite sincere. It was the sincerity of a mood, and of one which would have passed away quickly. She was far from finding peace and contentment in the existence she described. It is at this date that the change in her sentiments with regard to the man whose labours she had once been proud to share becomes evident. Duties, indeed, she was in no wise a woman to evade; but they no longer sufficed her, and she craved for an admixture of other interests. Though in her letters there is no word of complaint, in Madame Grandchamp's account of her visit to Le Clos a certain dissatisfaction on the part of her hostess with the conditions of her life is plainly discernible. At a distance the quiet of the country may have appealed to her; at closer quarters it was not without disadvantages. If she had wearied at Paris of fools

and knaves, they were not wanting in the provinces, where, in addition, the monarchy was still, with the majority, an object of faith, the idea of a republic detested, and liberty little more than a name. The rumour, too, had gained ground that Roland had been arrested as a "counter-revolutionist," and cries of "Les aristocrats à la lanterne" from the minority with whom she was in sympathy greeted his wife.

She had more personal grounds of discontent. Having taken her guest to Lyons, in order to show her the antiquities of the town, they were pursued thither by urgent summons from Roland, impatient for their return to Le Clos, and she openly deplored the necessity of resuming her wearisome and irksome labours.

"How greatly I am to be pitied!" she lamented. "The work I do"—taking notes for the *Dictionary of Manufactures*, to which Roland was a contributor—"disgusts and exhausts me. Shut up henceforth in the country, no distractions will interrupt the melancholy uniformity of my life or soften secret sorrows." To Bancal she deplored the prospect opening before her for the sake also of Roland and Eudora. "From the moment that my husband has no other occupation but in his study, I must be there to distract him and to sweeten his daily work, according to a habit and a duty which cannot be escaped. This existence is absolutely contrary to what is fitting for a child of ten in no way inclined to study. Were Roland happy after his own fashion it would be a different matter."

In the company of Madame Grandchamp she found some consolation. With her at hand, she imagined that she would have been better able to endure existence and the sacrifices demanded from her. Madame Grandchamp, however, had duties and ties, and was likewise becoming conscious that Le Clos was not a desirable habitation. As the autumnal season advanced,



her first illusions concerning it vanished. The soil was dry and stony, the mountains, with the approach of winter, were sombre and sad, the house was ugly and inconvenient. The Parisian was, in short, beginning to long for home, nor was it long before she went her way thither.

Madame Roland had taken too premature and gloomy a view of the future awaiting her. One of the last acts of the Constituent Assembly had been the suppression of the posts of inspectors of manufactures; it was desirable to press Roland's claims to a pension; it would also facilitate his work on the Encyclopædia were he in the capital. It was therefore decided that the coming winter should be spent in Paris. By November Madame Roland, with Eudora, was at Villefranche, preparing for departure, and on the 30th she was writing to Roland at Lyons to urge his early return, "for I am hungry for a sight of you and to make our final arrangements with you."

It would appear that the unfortunate Eudora had again been the object of criticism, on this occasion from her father.

"I read your daughter what concerned her," the mother wrote; "she burst out sobbing, and exclaimed in an original and energetic fashion, 'Ce papa me gronde toujours; ça m'ennuie.' I answered as you may imagine, pointing out that if you loved her less, you would scold her little; that it was your great desire to see her behave well which caused you to take notice of her faults, and that she should therefore be the more eager to correct herself. 'That does not encourage me,' she replied, still crying—'on the contrary'; ending, however, by calming herself and making good resolutions." For the rest, mother and daughter were reading the *Iliad* together and found it very entertaining; and with Paris in prospect Madame Roland was disposed to take a more cheerful view of the world in general, including her daughter.



## CHAPTER XV

Arrival in Paris—Relations with Madame Grandchamp—Disappointment—Changes in the capital—Madame Roland's despondency—Roland's appointment to the office of Minister of the Interior.

IT is sometimes a shock to compare forecasts with what was to follow upon them. When the Rolands, in December 1791, returned to take up their residence in Paris, not two years of life remained to either. Yet, in spite of a theoretic belief in the insecurity of their future shared with many of the chief actors in the drama that was going forward, they probably looked on to many years of labour and exertion. Roland thought of starting a *Journal des Arts*, of other literary work, of summers at Le Clos spent in the development of the estate, varied perhaps by winters in Paris and the political employment to be found there. Madame Roland's forecasts will have taken a different colour, as she mused upon the problem her marriage was beginning to present, unaware that a solution of it was close at hand. One peril had been at all events averted; her home was not to be permanently and uninterruptedly fixed in that "depth of the desert" from which she had addressed her letter to Robespierre, and for this she was doubtless thankful.

Madame Grandchamp had been commissioned to secure an apartment for the friends her influence had contributed to bring to Paris, and had prepared a lodging for them in the same hôtel they had inhabited before,

though now on the third storey. Yet, notwithstanding the demands made upon her, and to which she had gladly responded, a breach came near at this moment to ending the connection between the Rolands and their friend.

Madame Grandchamp, as the sequel shows, was true and faithful, and to her, as the single woman who remained on intimate terms with Madame Roland during the last months of her life, a certain interest attaches. But the course of their friendship was not destined to run smooth. Emotional, self-conscious, and liable to suffer from wounded feelings and outraged affection, she was apt, like Bosc, to take offence and to demand explanations. After her departure from Le Clos she had been ill content with the tone of Madame Roland's letters. They were witty. "Wit," cries Madame Grandchamp lamentably—"wit addressed to one you love, whose departure you wept, whom you desire to rejoin, who is about to venture everything to make you happy!" Madame Grandchamp had even meditated upon some plausible pretext to keep the culprit at a distance. It was too late; the Rolands had made their arrangements to winter in Paris.

Madame Grandchamp awaited their arrival in a condition of emotional excitement rendering the blow the greater when she received a note begging her not to meet the travellers at the Hôtel Britannique, as Roland and the child would be tired by their journey. "Ce trait," Madame Grandchamp adds, "m'accabla." Worse was to follow. When, overcoming wounded feelings, she sought them later, Roland seemed scarcely to remember her, and his wife's greeting was agitated and embarrassed. On this occasion it was plainly Roland who, annoyed by her criticisms of his work, was in fault, and a dignified letter from Madame Grandchamp—of which she kept a copy—produced so good an effect that he hurried to her house to offer his apologies, and

a scene of reconciliation ensued. "Alone, the room unlighted, my head leaning against the chimney-piece, I was giving myself up to a thousand conjectures. The bell is rung, I open ; I perceive a man wrapped in a cloak. Whilst I hesitate to allow him to advance, he throws it precipitately aside. It was . . . Roland himself." All was, for the present, well.

Much had changed in the capital since the Rolands had left it. Events followed in rapid sequence during these years. At the end of September Paris had kept festival. The constitution had been accepted by the King, and his action had elicited an outburst of enthusiasm and loyalty, as if the nation was persuaded that Louis and his subjects were like-minded and at peace. Lafayette had moved a universal amnesty, and all offences committed in the course of the Revolution were to be blotted out. Brotherhood, from a theory, was to become a fact.

The dissolution of the Constituent Assembly had been followed by the election of its successor, the Legislative Assembly. On October 1 it had met—a body made up of political novices, the members of the preceding one having been declared ineligible for seats in it. Some of the former deputies remained in Paris, to look critically on at the proceedings of those who replaced them; others, for a longer or shorter period, had returned to the provinces or gone abroad. Certain of the men who were to form the ill-starred party of the Gironde—Vergniaud, Guadet, Gensonné, Ducos, Valazé—were becoming a rallying-point and centre for others of like principles, Brissot, with a seat in the new Assembly, heading the group.

On Roland's return to Paris there was no indication that he would be called upon to play a conspicuous part in the political arena. It is true that the seven



months he had spent there had not been without their fruit, and that when his party counted up the men upon whom it could depend, he was not overlooked. With no brilliance or originality, his capacities were solid, his power of industry was great, and he was well accustomed to technical and official work. Amidst the general youth of the party of progress, his age, too, may have carried weight, no less than his reputation for uprightness, loyalty, and singleness of purpose. If a certain mediocrity marked his talents and gifts, Lamartine may have been right in believing that, safeguarding him from jealousy, it helped, rather than the reverse, to win him recognition. A man to be trusted and used, there was no fear that he would too greatly distance competitors.

For the present, however, he was allowed to remain in the background ; and whatever may have been his own sentiments, there can be little doubt that disappointment was keenly felt by his wife. The meetings of the leaders at the Hôtel Britannique had not been resumed. Of those who had been used to attend them, some—Buzot amongst them—were in the country ; Brissot had become a member of the Assembly ; Pétion, carried on a wave of popular enthusiasm to the mayoralty, had little time for old friends, and when Madame Roland hastened to the Mairie, his wife—perhaps dazzled by her new honours, perhaps adhering too strictly to the rule she had adopted, and which Madame Roland herself afterwards imitated, of receiving no women—welcomed her so coldly that she was not disposed to repeat her visit.

Nor was the condition of public affairs inspiring. The King's popularity had been of brief duration ; in the Assembly something approaching to chaos reigned ; one minister succeeded another ; decrees were passed in haste ; the more important bills—such as those relating to emigrants or to the priesthood—being rendered inoperative

by the royal veto. The nobles, gathered in force at Coblenz, offered a permanent menace to the newborn constitution ; war with the foreign powers was daily more imminent.

On the other hand, the municipality had been captured in the November elections by the patriots. Danton was a member of it with Billaud Varennes, Tallien, and others of their opinions ; and Pétion's successful candidature for the mayoralty had been supported by Marie Antoinette herself, on the grounds that—unlike his rival Lafayette—he was too great a fool to become the head of a party.

The true centre of power had shifted from the Assembly to the Jacobins. There measures were debated before they were placed before the Assembly, and the questions of the hour were discussed in the presence of the fifteen hundred the hall could hold. There Robespierre reigned supreme, in harmony, so far, with the Girondist party. Many of the Rolands' friends were influential members of the club. Bosc, Bancal, and Lanthénas occupied prominent positions in it, and Roland himself, admitted to the society on his arrival in Paris, later on filled a post on the Committee of Correspondence.

Though adhering steadily to the party of extremists and to its principles, Roland was chiefly occupied at this time with his scholastic and literary work. In order to spare his wife fatigue, for which her health at the moment rendered her unfit, Madame Grandchamp had volunteered to act as his amanuensis ; and at her house he was accustomed to spend the morning hours, the evenings being passed by the three either at the Hôtel Britannique or at the Jacobin Club, whither Roland would sometimes insist upon conducting his wife and her friend.

It is possible that Manon's interest in political affairs was, like her health, flagging. Yet from the thought of a return to Le Clos, to which Roland was again beginning



to revert, she shrank more and more. Her usual courage and buoyancy of spirit had temporarily failed her, replaced by profound depression and a mental lassitude rendering her weary of life and effort, and even inspiring her with a desire to put an end by death to the situation. No more than a conjecture can be hazarded as to the secret grief at which Madame Grandchamp hints—the trouble that was embittering her mind and sapping her strength. With Buzot it is clear that she had parted in September on terms of simple friendship, sending, in her first letter to Roland from Villefranche, an affectionate message to his wife. “She cannot imagine how much I was touched by the evidences of interest she gave me [at parting]. I left her in haste, as I had to tear myself away; but I shall never forget that moment. Tell her, as well as her worthy husband, how dear they are to us. You can speak for us both, as you love them as much as I do.”

Since that parting no meeting had taken place, nor was it till the autumn of 1792 that intercourse was renewed, on Buzot's return to Paris as a member of the National Assembly. Yet, if it is plain that they had not parted as lovers, he may have been responsible for the strengthening of her consciousness that a life shared with Roland was not all that, under other circumstances, it might have been made; he may have given an edge to latent discontent and stirred within her a more definite regret for wasted opportunities. It can scarcely be doubted that her affection for Roland was waning, leaving her determined to remain true to her duty, but transforming the services she had loved to render into an irksome task. Whatever was the cause, life for the moment had lost its savour, and a discouragement foreign to her strenuous and elastic nature had possession of her. Though Eudora was at hand, the child continued to contribute to her sense of failure and disappointment;



and a passage in her memoirs may be taken as the ultimate expression of it. "I have a young and amiable daughter," she wrote in her prison, "but nature has made her cold and indolent. . . . She will be a good woman, with certain gifts; but her stagnant nature and her unelastic mind will never give my heart the sweet enjoyment I had promised myself. . . . She will know neither my strong affections, nor my sorrows, nor my pleasures."

Eudora, it is plain, was not adapted to make up for what was lacking in her mother's existence. In March, however, an event occurred sufficiently exciting and important to rouse her from her dejection and to impart a stimulus and interest to life. This was Roland's appointment to the post of Minister of the Interior.

Many causes had contributed to bring about a wholly unexpected development. Minister after minister had failed in the hopeless attempt to conciliate all parties, and to satisfy alike King and people. Louis had determined on the step of appointing a patriot ministry, and it became a question who should be suggested for the posts to be filled. Lanthenas, possessing more influence than was warranted either by his talents or his personality, and still Roland's devoted friend, was urgent on his behalf; though recognising the fact that his quasi-retirement from public life presented a difficulty. Why, he asked Madame Grandchamp impatiently, why had Roland isolated himself? Every one did justice to his enlightenment and uprightness, but they were alarmed by the stiffness of his character.

Madame Grandchamp, in spite of her affection for Madame Roland—in which her husband was now included—differed from Lanthenas with regard to his fitness for the post in question. She considered neither husband nor wife—she did not dissociate them in her mind—well adapted to conduct a ministry in times so stormy. It

would be to expose them to peril, without compensating advantage to the public. Having led a provincial life, engaged in literary work, they were conversant neither with men nor with the Court, and would fall into every snare set for them.

The choice of a minister did not lie with Madame Grandchamp. At a meeting in Vergniaud's apartments in the Place Vendôme the question of Roland's nomination as a fit candidate for the vacant post was raised, and by the middle of March the subject had been broached to his wife. In view of the possibility that the King might appoint a patriot Ministry, she was told that the party were the more anxious to put forward men of capacity and weight since the scheme might be a trap laid for them by the Court, whose purposes would be served should the choice fall upon persons supplying it with just reason for complaint. It was added that to many Roland's name had occurred.

The suggestion made little impression on his wife. The nomination of a man whose previous work had been done in so subordinate a capacity to one of the highest offices in the State may well have seemed to her merely the hope of a friend. A few days later, however—it was on March 21—she received a visit from Brissot. Finding her alone, he informed her that the question was under practical consideration; and when, answering lightly, she demanded the meaning of his jest, he assured her that he was speaking in all seriousness; and that his present object was to ascertain whether her husband would consent to assume the burden of office. To this she replied that, having spoken to him on the subject when the matter was first put before her, she imagined that, though sensible of the difficulty and even danger to be apprehended, he would not shrink from the task. She promised to find out his views and to let Brissot know them on the morrow.

She proved right. With regard to the multiplicity of duties belonging to the post, Roland observed with a laugh that he had always observed so much mediocrity in persons in office that he had felt surprise that any business at all was done ; that he therefore felt no fears as to his capacities ; that the situation was critical, but that for whosoever only desired to do his duty and was indifferent to his chances of dismissal the danger was minimised. Nor could a zealous man be indifferent to the hope of being useful to his country. An answer in the affirmative was accordingly sent to Brissot.

The evening of March 23 was spent by Roland— anxious to escape a visitor of his wife's—with Madame Grandchamp. Intimate as he had become with her, he knew how to keep his own counsel ; for in discussing the question of the hour and passing in review the men likely to be chosen for office, he put the possibility of his appointment lightly aside. " My obscurity at least safeguards me from the fear of it," he said, " and under these circumstances I bless it."

At nine o'clock he went home. Two hours later two guests knocked at his door. Brissot was one, and, with him was Dumouriez—himself the new Minister of Foreign Affairs—come to " salute a colleague," and to announce to Roland his appointment to the post of Minister of the Interior ; also discoursing of the sincere adherence of the King to the constitution, and his own great satisfaction that a patriot of Roland's stamp should be called upon to assist in the Government. Brissot was no less flattering. The post allotted to Roland was the most delicate and difficult of all, and it was a weight off the minds of the friends of liberty to see it entrusted to hands so strong and pure. Practical details followed—the hour when the new minister would be presented to Louis, would take the oath and be admitted to the council—and the visitors departed.



Though, as it would appear, Roland had demanded some hours for consideration, all must have known that his decision was taken.

"That is a man," Roland observed, when Dumouriez was gone, "who displays patriotism and shows ability."

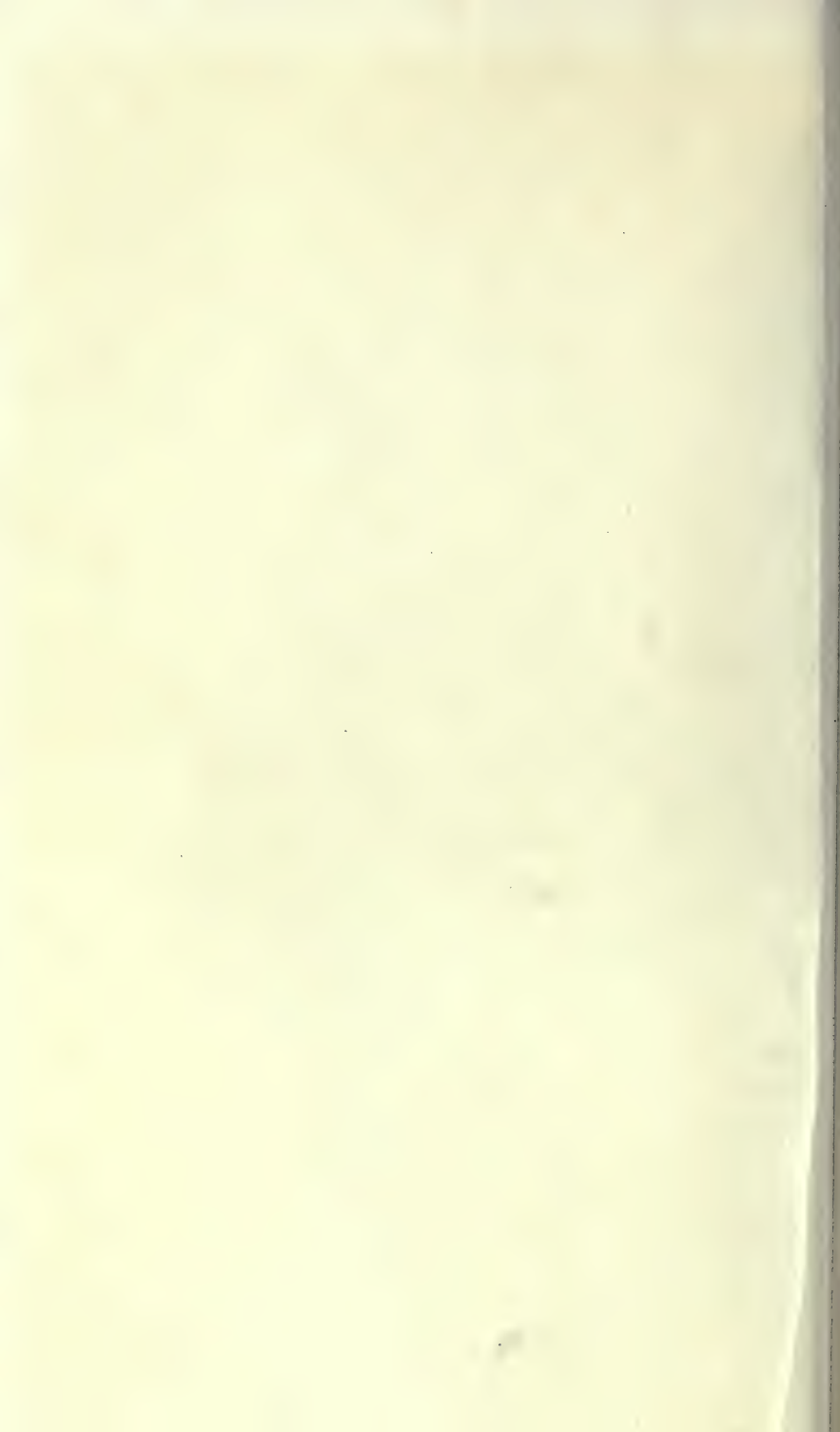
"That is a man," was Madame Roland's verdict, "who has a cunning mind, a false expression, and whom one should perhaps distrust more than any one in the world. . . . I shall not be surprised if he has you dismissed one day." Integrity and candour incarnate on the one side, a severe equity, no courtierlike habits, nor any of the contrivances of a man of the world; on the other, the wit of a roué, the boldness that mocks at all save self-interest and reputation—these were the characteristics of the two men as they appeared to her, and she asked herself how elements so much opposed could combine.

Madame Grandchamp's history of these days supplies additional details. She had parted from Roland at nine o'clock. At eleven—it must have been later—a note was brought her from his wife, conveying the momentous news. "Dumouriez has just left us," she wrote. "He came to make the announcement that the King has named my husband Minister of the Interior and that he will to-morrow receive the portfolio. Roland has asked to delay giving his answer until ten o'clock. It will be you who will decide it. Come as soon as possible."

What the answer would be Sophie, in spite of her friend's flattering assurance, well knew, and she regretted it profoundly. Underestimating perhaps, as her conversation with Lanthenas showed, the powers possessed by the Rolands of dealing with changed circumstances, she foresaw, as before, difficulty and danger. But she was acquainted with Manon. She had half-divined a secret ambition on her part; jealousy of men



GENERAL DUMOURIEZ.  
From a lithograph by Delpech.





preferred to her husband ; mortification at the change her position had undergone since the preceding year and at "la nullité à laquelle elle se trouvait réduite" ; and could scarcely doubt that she would seize the offered opportunity of doing more than recover the ground she had lost. Nor did Madame Grandchamp omit to do justice to a worthier motive—her desire to be of service to the cause she loved.

On the following day Madame Roland wrote to make the announcement of the appointment to Champagneux, still at Lyons. "I do not wish you to learn from the public papers that our friend was yesterday nominated Minister of the Interior. He had in the press a *Journal des Arts*, with which he was going to have occupied himself solely. He is called to other work ; to it he will devote himself as calmly as he would relinquish the post should he not be able to perform the duties belonging to it." To Bancal she wrote in the same sense.

Early that morning Madame Grandchamp had hastened to the Hôtel Britannique, where in the humble apartment they occupied she found the Rolands both in bed, and an emotional scene took place.

"I am losing you for ever," Sophie cried ; "forgive me if this renders me indifferent to the honours awaiting you."

Roland energetically negated the possibility of alienation. Friendship apart, she was indispensable to them. Acquainted from childhood with the court, it would be for her to enlighten their ignorance. Furthermore, he begged that she would undertake the task of making extracts each day from the newspapers of all it would concern him to know.

That day was a fatiguing one. Practical matters, money, purchases, had to be discussed ; a deputation of joy and congratulation from the markets to be received, when, Madame Roland being incapacitated by her state

of health, Sophie received in her stead the compliments intended for the wife of the minister. Business followed, taking Madame Grandchamp out ; and on her return to the Hôtel Britannique a surprise awaited her. She has left an account of the scene that met her eyes.

"I thought, as I entered the salon, that I was dreaming," she wrote. "My friend, who that morning had seemed to be dying, had recovered her freshness and her good looks. She was surrounded by a numerous circle who were overwhelming her with praise. Roland shared the homage and seemed well content."

The landlady, gratified at the unexpected advancement of her tenants, had placed the entire house at their disposal, and ministers, officials, and leading members of the Assembly, filled the room. A couple of lacqueys stood at the door. Was it all really true? Madame Grandchamp asked herself. Yesterday a bedroom and a sitting-room in the attics, a simple country servant, absolute neglect, a man uncertain as to his life, a woman wishing to terminate her own. In a single day all changed, everything transformed. Looking on, Madame Grandchamp felt a not inexcusable pang. When the world takes possession of man or woman, private rights are apt to suffer.

And thus Roland entered upon official life.



MADAME ROLAND.

From an engraving by Baudran.





## CHAPTER XVI

Roland in office—Madame Roland's share in his promotion—Bosc's susceptibilities—Pache—Madame Roland's life at the Hôtel de l'Intérieure—The King and his ministers—Declaration of war.

THERE have been those, as there were sure to be, who have seen in Madame Roland's satisfaction at her husband's admission into the arena of politics nothing but the vulgar pride of the bourgeoisie at her elevation to a sphere she could never have hoped to reach. To the exclusion of all other causes of rejoicing, they have continually dwelt upon the gratified vanity of the daughter of the Paris engraver. To take this view of the matter is to be as one-sided as to assert that personal considerations had nothing to do with her satisfaction. It is at all times pleasant to rise, nor had Manon ever pretended to be indifferent to social distinctions or been content with the environment into which she was born. By talents, abilities, and taste she had long ago vindicated her claim to admission to a region where money and money-making did not constitute the main objects of life, and even before Roland crossed her path she had ever chosen for her friends men who had wider interests at heart.

Of late years and since the novelty of married life had worn off, the political situation and the enthusiastic cult of freedom had engrossed her thoughts; and though forced to look on at the struggle from a distance, she had done her best to animate and sustain

the courage and energy of those nearer the centre of revolution. Under these circumstances it would have been strange if, apart from any unworthy pride or vanity, she had not rejoiced that Roland had obtained recognition; and that both he and she were to be placed where their opinions would have weight, and she herself would be at length free to employ her gifts in promoting the public welfare. To man or woman conscious of conspicuous talents and abilities it must necessarily be a bitter thing to be debarred from using them. That trial she had endured, and who shall blame her if she was gladdened by the knowledge that it was at an end?

Another reason may have legitimately increased her self-congratulation. She must have been well aware that she had materially contributed to her husband's success. "He walked into power," said Lamartine, "without motion on his own part, carried on by the favour of a party, by the prestige belonging to an unknown man, by the contempt of his enemies, and by the genius of his wife." Lamartine has been accused of unduly exalting Madame Roland at her husband's expense. But Barba-rous, who knew both, and admired and respected Roland, concurs in the view; and declaring that of all modern men he approached nearest to Cato, added that it must be admitted that it was to his wife that he owed his courage and his gifts. It would now be seen how both would make use of the opportunity afforded them.

In a letter addressed to Robespierre on March 27, apparently in response to his congratulations, Madame Roland did not disguise her sense of sharing in a measure in her husband's responsibilities. Inviting him to dine at the Hôtel Britannique, where she was remaining for the present, she promised that he would find, in the wife of the minister, that simplicity which rendered her worthy not to be regarded with contempt; adding that it was with the help alone of wise patriots that she could hope



to contribute to well-doing. "For me," she added, "you stand at the head of that class. Come quickly—I am impatient to see you. . . ." The words read strangely in the light of what was so soon to follow.

To the same date belong two notes addressed to Bosc. It is very characteristic of Madame Roland that, in the midst of the excitement and turmoil of these days, she found leisure and thought to bestow upon her friends and their grievances. Bosc had, it would seem, been again suffering from wounded susceptibilities—unless, which is unlikely, he had kept up the quarrel of the previous September for six months—and her present communication seems to be in reply to a plea on his part for reconciliation both with her and with Madame Grandchamp. As usual Madame Roland was eager to respond to the overtures of an old friend, and though doubtful whether Madame Grandchamp would be found equally placable, she was ready to use her influence to make peace; a joint letter from the two, dated the same day, testifying to her success. If Bosc, however, was to be readmitted to all the privileges he had forfeited, Madame Roland accompanied her affectionate welcome of the returning prodigal with salutary admonitions. "*Moins d'exaltation, mon ami, plus de justice : le raison et le bonheur le demandent également.*" Madame Grandchamp, she also told him, was in a distressing condition, required to be taken out of herself, and caused Madame Roland to regret that she was no longer in a position to give herself up, as heretofore, almost entirely to friendship. Why could she not shed around her her own calm—a calm affected neither by prosperity nor reverses?

It is curious to compare Madame Roland's conviction of her equability of mind and spirits with the account given by Madame Grandchamp of her state some weeks earlier. That she had not only recovered from

her strange fit of dejection, but had forgotten it, is proof of the complete cure effected by the new impulse given to her thoughts and energies.

Madame Grandchamp's "distressing condition"—to whatever causes it was primarily due—was probably accentuated by the verification of the forebodings she had expressed as to the effect to be apprehended from Roland's promotion. It was Madame Roland's misfortune to possess friends whose demands were difficult to satisfy; and though she continued at first to pay frequent, if hurried, visits to Madame Grandchamp's apartments, "*une circonstance*," says the latter mysteriously, "*lui fit supprimer ses visites*"; and the two seem to have met no more during Roland's first term of office. Divergence of opinion on matters political and moral may have contributed to render intercourse difficult, more especially in the case of a man involved in the machinery of government and with obligations of loyalty towards his colleagues. Madame Grandchamp was in no way disposed to practise economy of truth with regard to her views.

"I asked Roland," she says, "what he could expect of men who did not respect the most sacred ties of society. I took my examples from amongst those he esteemed and often received. . . . 'They will help to destroy despotism,' was the reply; 'their private actions have nothing to do with the truths they spread abroad.'"

Madame Grandchamp disagreed. By these very private actions corruption, in her opinion, was propagated and hope destroyed. Whatever may have been the rights of the case, her denunciation of the Rolands' friends and brothers-in-arms was not calculated to facilitate intercourse with them, and Madame Roland may have felt it best that they should remain for the present apart.

Meanwhile, if the prospect opened out was brilliant,

it was uncertain, and Madame Roland was not blind to that fact. At the time of his appointment Roland had taken a lease of an unfurnished apartment in the rue de la Harpe, which, with Madame Grandchamp's assistance, was in course of preparation as a permanent dwelling-place. In spite of changed circumstances, the work was carried on.

"The setting in order of the little apartment in the rue de la Harpe is proceeding," Madame Roland told Bancal. "It is a place of retreat to be kept ever in view, in the same way that certain philosophers keep their coffins under their eye."

To the uncertainty always attaching to an office dependent upon the predominance of a party other elements of doubt were added. It was a difficult juncture for a novice in the art of government to enter upon it. Every man was against every man; each party keeping an anxious eye upon the movements of the others, the Court distrustful of all, and the enemy at the gates. The ministers were, moreover, confronted by the fact that their subordinates had been placed in office by their predecessors, and could scarcely be expected to lend cordial or whole-hearted co-operation to the newcomers and their policy. At the same time, to have removed those conversant with official affairs in order to replace them by others whose loyalty could be counted upon would have been fatal to the orderly transaction of business. Face to face with this dilemma, Roland strove to meet it by the appointment of a trustworthy secretary, whose duty it would be to keep a strict watch on documents prepared by less reliable officials, to convey important orders, and to be at hand to undertake confidential business. The expedient, had the right man been selected, was good. That Roland's choice was unfortunate was mainly the result of an error of judgment on the part of his wife.



Amongst her early friends had been one Gibert, a post-office official, honest, upright, and with a taste for the arts. By Gibert an intimate associate was presented to Manon, named Pache, a man of very simple manners, and cherishing so great a love of liberty that he had retired to Switzerland, where devotees of freedom were wont to take refuge. It was this Pache, now returned to Paris, as simple as ever, and even more disinterested, since he had given up a Government pension on the plea that his private means were sufficient for his needs, whom Roland appointed to the post of confidential clerk.

A man of so exaggerated a modesty that, as Madame Roland shrewdly observes, people were at first tempted to adopt his estimate of himself, and to end by feeling that injustice had been done him, he accepted the proffered office with enthusiasm, on the sole condition that it should carry with it neither title nor emolument; and Roland was provided with a coadjutor, upright and patriotic, who arrived at the Hôtel at seven in the morning bringing a piece of bread for his daily nourishment, and performed his duties with admirable zeal and tact. It was not until later on that the true character of this single-minded public servant was discovered.

Roland had likewise secured the aid of Lanthenas, whose fidelity, so far, had never wavered, by making him a Chief of Division in the office; and before Madame Roland had taken possession of the Hôtel which had received so many occupants in late years that, according to Carlyle, it was not so much a palace as a caravanserai, she and her friend were busy with a favourite scheme, now, like others, enjoying a chance of realisation. This was the establishment of a correspondence bureau in connection with the popular societies started in the provinces, for the purpose of promoting their political education by sending them useful literature

gratis and paying speakers who should propagate right opinions. Before the project could be carried out it was necessary to obtain the permission of the Assembly, and Madame Roland suggested that members belonging to Roland's party should be gathered together twice weekly at the ministerial hôtel with a view to furthering this and other branches of ministerial work.

In this matter he was firm in his opposition to his wife's wishes. "I want no other support but my integrity and my zeal," he said loftily. "As a private individual, I could communicate my views to those who governed ; as a minister, such reunions would cause me to be suspected of intrigue ; the very influence they would exercise is sufficient to demonstrate the danger of such methods. Public opinion must be decided by my loyalty and candour."

It was well said ; it will be seen nevertheless that, according to Dumouriez, Madame Roland carried her point, and her house became the rendezvous of the party of the Gironde.

Following the example set by Madame Pétion at the Mairie, she had wisely determined upon receiving no women, thus safeguarding herself from the solicitations of anxious wives or mothers who desired to obtain advancement for the men belonging to them. An object-lesson as to the persecution to which she was liable to be subjected had been supplied by Madame Robert—the same who, with her husband, had sought shelter at the Hôtel Britannique the day after the massacre of the Champs de Mars.

Roland's appointment was not twenty-four hours old when this lady appeared to claim the patronage of the minister ; and in spite of Madame Roland's attempts to satisfy her with vague assurances of her husband's desire to serve the public by making use of competent subordinates, she returned again and again to press her

husband's claims, until Madame Roland was forced to inform her that the official posts were all filled, holding out no hopes, in answer to further solicitations, that Roland would apply on Robert's behalf to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, or do more than testify to his political views if called upon to answer for them. In three weeks Madame Robert returned triumphant, having obtained Dumouriez's promise of a post, of which she begged Madame Roland to remind him. When the latter did so, it was in the presence of Brissot, who put in, with his customary good-nature, a word for Robert—a genuine Revolutionist and a hot patriot. The reign of liberty, he said, should be useful to those who loved it.

Dumouriez, however, did not take the matter seriously. "You are speaking of that little black-headed man, as broad as he is long?" he asked gaily. "Upon my word, I do not want to disgrace myself. I shall not send such a *caboche* anywhere," further explaining, in reply to Brissot's kindly urgency, that it was no inferior post to which the little *tonneau* aspired, but to that of ambassador at Constantinople; whereupon all joined in laughter, and it was agreed that there was no more to be said. At Madame Robert's next visit to the Ministry, Madame Roland warned her, with her accustomed candour, that discreditable rumours were afloat with regard to herself and her husband, and the acquaintanceship terminated. Danton subsequently took Robert under his protection, and he and his wife became dangerous enemies to the Rolands.

The appointment of the "patriot ministry" had produced a certain stir at Court; and the sight of Roland at the Tuileries wearing the Quakerish costume he affected, his thin hair covered by a round hat, and his shoes tied with ribbons, caused something approaching to a shock.



"Quoi, monsieur," whispered a functionary in Dumouriez's ear, as he looked at the new minister, "no buckles to his shoes!"

"Monsieur," returned the General dramatically, "all is lost."

Dumouriez's view of his colleague was given later on. He had, he considered, little ability, much information, and would have made an excellent Minister of Commerce in quiet times. The vanity of passing for a man of virtue was the origin of his air of stiffness. As for his dress, if it was affectedly antique, it was at least clean; and, not without dignity in the exercise of his office, he made himself respected.

The fashion in which business was transacted by a Cabinet composed of elements so dissimilar was curiously informal. The ministers were accustomed to attend the King, each in turn presenting the papers belonging to his department for the royal signature; after which a move was made to the council-chamber, where Louis read the newspapers, wrote letters, conversed good-naturedly with the members of the council on their private affairs, talked sensibly of public matters, and displayed or affected a desire for the success of the constitution. Was it possible, the men responsible for the Government asked themselves, that he was sincere, and that, at length, all would go well?

"What do you think of him?" Madame Roland inquired of her husband eagerly after his first presentation.

"He has more information than he is thought to have," was the reply; "under the semblance of *bonhomie*, I take him to be acute, and capable of playing us a trick if we are not on our guard."

If this was Roland's first impression—it is quoted by Madame Grandchamp—it was afterwards modified to a degree his wife found irritating. Both he and Clavière,

the Minister of Finance, appear for the space of three weeks to have fallen under the spell of benevolent royalty, were delighted with Louis's good intentions and sanguine as to the result.

Madame Roland was less hopeful. "*Bon Dieu*," she once said, "when I see you set out in this confiding frame of mind, I always imagine you to be in danger of perpetrating an act of folly."

Clavière protested. "I assure you," he said, "that the King is perfectly aware that his interest is bound up in observing the established laws. He reasons too pertinently on the subject not to be persuaded of this truth."

"*Ma foi*," added Roland, "if he is not an honest man, he is the greatest scoundrel in the kingdom. It is not possible to dissimulate so well."

Madame Roland was unconvinced. It seemed to her incredible that a sovereign, born and bred in an atmosphere of despotism, should honestly adhere to the constitution, and she proved right. In the meantime Louis displayed a certain astuteness in dealing with the men with whom he was thus brought into personal relations. On the main questions at issue, he could not be in accord with a body of whom the majority considered a republic the ideal form of government; but he was adroit in avoiding discussion, and in turning the conversation from dangerous topics. When war was talked of, he would speak of travels; when it was a question of diplomacy, would discuss the habits and customs of different localities or countries; if the condition of home affairs was raised, he would make inquiries about agricultural or industrial details, showing a gratifying interest in Roland's writings. Dumouriez was encouraged to tell anecdotes, and the council-board assumed the character of a café and place of amusement. With more candour than courtesy Madame Roland would criticise the pro-

ceedings described by her husband, perceiving that on the majority of occasions little business had been done.

"You are all in a good humour because you experience no vexations, and are even treated with civility. You seem each to do much as you please in your several departments. I fear that you are being tricked."

"Yet business goes on," Roland argued.

"Yes," she replied, "and time is being lost, for, involved as you are in a flood of affairs, I would rather you employed three hours in meditating in solitude upon great combinations than spent them in useless talk."

The rebuke might have been more gently worded. Yet there was much to excuse, if not justify, impatience during those first weeks of the patriot administration. Were the men at present at the head of the Government destined to prove the salvation of France? The question must have presented itself again and again to Madame Roland as she watched the ministers who were accustomed to dine every Friday at the Hôtel of the Interior, and appraised with her critical intelligence the weight and character of each—of de Grave, Minister of War, inept, gentle, and timid, bent upon the conciliation of all, to the point of becoming himself a thing of nought; of Lacoste, at the Marine, cold and dogmatic, the typical official; of Duranthon, Minister of Justice, honest but lazy; of Clavière, upright, active, and industrious, yet obstinate and irascible; of Dumouriez, cleverer and less moral than any other of his colleagues. Were these men, with Roland, of whose merits—and deficiencies—she was so well aware, fitted to lead Israel into the promised land?

Perhaps the very uncertainty enveloping the future, the knowledge that others had tried, and tried in vain, to grapple with the situation, may have lent an added element of excitement to it, not altogether unwelcome to such a woman as Marie Roland,



arduous, restless, longing above all things to live, to taste of everything that existence here on earth has to offer, and never unwilling to spend and be spent in the cause she had at heart. The long, weary years of uselessness were at an end ; she had her hands full of work worth doing.

She has left a clear and candid account of the share she took in Roland's duties and labours. In all those labours she shared. Her life at this time had concentrated itself to a singular extent. Side-paths or interests would seem scarcely to have existed for her. She made a rule of paying and receiving no merely social visits—a custom involving the less sacrifice on her part as her acquaintances in Paris were few. By this means she was left the more time to devote to the fulfilment of the demands made upon her by her husband. Twice a week she gave dinners for men, attended by the ministers, by deputies, or by others who had business relations with Roland. Her tact and discretion, her careful abstinence from the semblance of any species of interposition in their debates or discussions, had borne fruit, and they spoke freely before her, often preferring, when confidential affairs were in question, to seek Roland in her private sitting-room than to transact their business in his official apartments. She had become a centre of the Girondist party, her keen wit, her sagacity, and her personal magnetism making her more and more an influence to be reckoned with ; a woman who inspired brave men to acts of heroism and gave courage and faith to the timid. Even upon those who did no more than cross her path she left an impression not rapidly effaced. Once only after the Revolution had swept her into its current did Lemontey see her, but the picture he has left is clear and vivid.

She seemed to him to have grown no older since the days when, in the middle of her country surroundings:

she had retained so singular an air of youth ; nor was her freshness and simplicity any less ; so that, even with her long-haired child at her side, she might have been taken for Roland's daughter rather than his wife. Yet her eyes, with their melancholy clear-sightedness, saw the beginnings of the anarchy she would, if need were, fight to the death. " I remember," he added, " the calm, resolute tone in which she told me she would carry, when necessary, her head to the scaffold." And so the two parted, never to meet again.

The most important part of the labours she performed was her participation in the preparation of letters and dispatches. As in earlier days she had assisted Roland in every species of literary work, so she now participated in his ministerial toil. At one upon all points of political and social principle, agreed in aims, objects, and hopes, more ready than he with her pen, there was no danger that she would commit him to sentiments or opinions he did not share. Looking at the matter dispassionately, she could assert that though without her aid he would have been no less capable as an administrator, his activity and knowledge, like his integrity, being his own, she was the means of his producing a greater effect, by introducing into his writings the mixture of strength and gentleness, reason and sentiment, belonging perhaps only to a woman endowed with sensibility and a healthy mind. To work thus behind the scenes was her delight. Finding happiness in doing good, she had no desire for notoriety : " I see, in this world, no rôle which suits me save that of Providence." The avowal—she admits that it is liable to misconception—is a sincere and frank confession of her inordinate aspirations.

There could be no doubt that those spring weeks covered a time when France and its newly established Government demanded all the help that could be afforded it. The aspect, as regarded its foreign foes, was in-



creasingly dark. Troops were continuing to gather at Coblenz ; the emigrants, formally discouraged by Austria, were permitted to maintain a staff of officers in the royal uniform and white cockades at Brussels ; Austria herself had crossed the frontier of Basle and was a menace in that quarter. The conditions imposed by Leopold were exacted by his successor, Francis II., if peace were to be preserved ; and those conditions were contrary to the whole spirit of the Revolution. War was practically certain. The country desired it, the ministers saw the necessity of it ; the dominant party in the Assembly concurred in the view. Months earlier Brissot, the leader of the Girondists, had declared that, in his opinion, it was inevitable. " By force of reasoning and of facts," he had said at the Jacobins in December, " I have come to the conviction that a people which has conquered liberty after ten centuries of slavery has need of war. War is necessary to consolidate freedom, to purge the constitution from the remains of despotism ; war is necessary to banish from our midst the men who could corrupt." Emigrant rebels, foreign sovereigns, were united against France. " Can we hesitate to attack them ? Do you desire to destroy the aristocracy at a single blow ? Then destroy Coblenz."

Brissot's words had re-echoed through the kingdom, and the months that had passed since they were uttered had served to give his arguments increased force, and to add to the danger of delay in dealing with the gathering strength of the powers arrayed against the constitution. The main question was practically decided. It remained to determine which of the belligerents was to take the initial step of declaring war. On April 20 that question was settled.

Accompanied by his ministers, Louis listened at the Assembly to the report read by Dumouriez as minister in charge of foreign affairs, explaining the failure of peace



negotiations, recapitulating the demands of Austria, and stating his opinion that war was inevitable. After which the King, the unhappy mouthpiece of men he must have regarded as engaged in the destruction of the monarchy, tears in his eyes, his voice shaken by emotion, announced and endorsed the conclusion of the council. War must be declared.

The decision was welcomed by the majority of the Assembly, and that evening a resolution approving it was carried almost unanimously.

## CHAPTER XVII

Robespierre and the Gironde—Madame Roland's position—Disagreement between King and cabinet—Roland's letter to the King—His dismissal.

WAR was declared. It was for the Government to take measures to carry it on with success, and their task was rendered the more difficult by the dissensions in the Assembly. To this juncture belongs a letter of Madame Roland's, interesting alike as affording the first indication on her part of a dangerous divergence in the opinions of Robespierre and his friends from the men with whom she was associated, and as showing the tone of something like authority she was by this time assuming.

Her letters to Robespierre, both from Le Clos and at the time of her husband's appointment, had been couched in terms of warm admiration and respect; whilst a certain intimacy is implied in a general invitation she had given him to dinner. In a note to Bosc—now fully restored to his former footing—she wrote of having been asked by Robespierre for a rendezvous. On the other hand, a letter to Robespierre himself points to the desire for a meeting having been on her side, rather than his. It is certain that some days before it was written he had alluded at the Jacobins in violent terms to “la cour et les intrigants dont la cour se sert”; and on April 25, in a stormy debate in the Assembly, had come into conflict with Brissot and

Guadet. On the night he had thus declared himself an enemy Madame Roland took up her pen and addressed to him a letter of grave remonstrance, beginning it in language implying that it was not the first time she had attempted to play the part of peacemaker. "The more you appeared to differ upon an interesting question from men whose insight and integrity I respect, the more important it seemed to me to bring together those who, having but one aim, should conciliate each other as to the manner of attaining it. . . . With grief I saw that you were persuaded that whosoever held a different opinion to yours as to the war was not a good citizen. I have never done you a like injustice. I know excellent citizens who hold opinions contrary to yours, and I have not esteemed you the less because you took a different view. I sighed over your prejudices; I desired, in order to avoid contracting any myself, to be made acquainted with your reasons. You promised to communicate them to me; you were to come to see me. . . . You have shunned me, you have made known to me nothing, and meantime you are exciting public opinion against those who do not agree with you. I am too candid not to admit that this course seems to me lacking in candour. . . . Time will make all things known; its justice is slow but sure; it is the hope and the consolation of good men. I await from it the confirmation or the justification of my esteem for those for whom I feel it. It is for you, monsieur, to consider that this justice of time will immortalise your fame or destroy it for ever."

It was the tone of a monitress, befitting rather the minister than the minister's wife, nor was Robespierre likely to be moved by the appeal. The very fact that it was made, doubtless with her husband's cognisance, indicates the position she had been accorded in her party and her confidence in her influence and power even outside the inner circle of her intimates.



If Louis had yielded—with what reluctance can be guessed—in declaring war against his natural allies, the dividing line between himself and his council was daily becoming more clearly accentuated. Throughout May the gulf was widening. De Grave had been replaced at the War Office by a more competent substitute; and Servan, who had been known to the Rolands at Lyons and owed his appointment to Madame Roland, was War Minister—upright, austere, and brave, lacking only, in her opinion, coolness and force. In a letter to him on his promotion she did not disclaim her responsibility. “Yes, monsieur,” she wrote, “I have wished it, willed it. I adhere to that opinion, and you will justify it.”

He justified it—if Dumouriez is to be believed—by remaining entirely at her orders. It cannot be denied that her manner of addressing him is somewhat that of the commanding officer of the Minister of War. Hitherto, she told him, the ministry had been handicapped by the presence of a *ci-devant*. Now that all its members were true revolutionists, if they had not shown their character and taken imposing measures in a fortnight it would have been proved that they were of no greater worth than others. “Remember your severe plans for restraining the officers and restoring confidence to the soldiers; *remember* the letter the King is to be made to write to Lückner—it is urgent, and must take effect. . . . Remember your decisions upon the necessity of collecting a great force, instead of small armies, upon the Brabant frontier. Remember, my worthy friend, that justice is kindness in men who are in office, and that firmness is the hardest quality to preserve in that position.”

Again, and this time to a more docile pupil than Robespierre, the letter, with its italics, is the letter of a monitress.

During that month of May events were hurrying on,

The disagreement between Louis and what was nicknamed at Court the Sansculotte Ministry could not be permanently disguised by casual conversation and personal kindness ; and the two decrees of the Assembly with regard to the banishment of non-juring priests and the formation of a camp of 20,000 volunteers, to be collected in Paris as a defence against enemies foreign and domestic, brought matters to a crisis. After vain attempts to gain time, Louis vetoed both measures. To those who had cherished the hope that the King had yielded to the inevitable and would consent to co-operate in the work of the Assembly, his decision caused bitter disappointment. The measures at stake were considered by Roland and his party essential to the safety of the country. The priests—most unfortunately for themselves and for religion associated with reaction—were viewed as a peril at home ; the presence of a strong force in the capital, whose loyalty to the Revolution could be reckoned on, was essential, now that war was imminent ; and to the Minister of the Interior, at first obstinately tenacious of his belief in Louis's good faith, his refusal to ratify the decrees of the Assembly involved the reversal of his opinion. Prepared for the step by the delays Louis had interposed, his confidence in him had been shaken. The formal veto pressed home the conviction that it would be impossible for men of his own political creed to administer the Government—a conviction shared to the full by his wife. Throughout those weeks of anxiety and excitement she had watched day by day the indications of defeat. Honestly persuaded that the constitution, with all its faults, offered for the present the best chance of tranquillity and order, to her, no less than to Roland, the proof afforded by the King's determination that it could not be successfully worked occasioned sincere regret. Her mind had become centred, fixed, on the political situation ; she was possessed by



what she herself termed a moral fever, and expedients to avert disaster, hopeless as they might be, were the pre-occupations of the hour.

Amongst the ministers, Dumouriez was most genuinely attached to Louis ; but his efforts to convince him of the necessity of submitting to the popular will were fruitless. Had he been King, he told a colleague, he would have defeated all parties by becoming a Jacobin. For those who lacked the art of *savoir vivre*, he had the contempt of a man of the world ; and of Roland he once said that he was the most scheming and the clumsiest of the Girondists. Had it been true, it would have been an unfortunate combination. True or false, it was not by such men as Roland that the political situation could be successfully dealt with, if, indeed, it could have been so dealt with by any man. Beyond a certain point no arguments could move Louis ; and disunion—attributed by Dumouriez to Servan's appointment—had replaced the harmony reigning for a brief space in the cabinet. According to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Madame Roland's rooms had become the *bureau* of the Gironde, and the Friday ministerial dinners were transformed into the meetings of a faction desirous of directing the Government. Taking this view of the matter, Dumouriez and Lacoste not unnaturally resolved to abstain from any discussion on these occasions of the business connected with their departments ; representing to Roland the danger involved in disclosing to members of the Assembly the proceedings of the council. There were times, they declared, when secrecy was a necessity. Roland disagreed. He would do nothing, he replied, without taking the advice of his friends—or he might have added, said Dumouriez, of his wife.

Not only on the more important questions of policy was the ministry at variance. Sentiment counted for something. Dumouriez, Lacoste, and in a lesser degree



Duranthon, were loyal to the monarchical principle ; the republican views of their three colleagues were increasingly pronounced. To Dumouriez what he conceived to be abuse of Louis's gentleness was offensive ; the "pin-pricks" to which the King was subjected at the council-board revolted him. He was also indignant when at one of the Friday dinners Guadet, a prominent Girondist member, produced a letter addressed in what the General considered insolent terms to the King, requiring him to replace his non-juring confessor by a constitutional priest, and demanded that it should receive the signature of the ministers. Refusing his concurrence, Dumouriez said scornfully that the King might have his affairs of conscience directed by an iman, a rabbi, a papist, or a Calvinist, and no one would have a right to object. The proposal was dropped, but the Gironde was no more inclined than before to include the sovereign in their scheme of liberty.

In the middle of May the idea of a joint letter to Louis, dealing with the important question of the veto, had occurred to the Rolands. Again difficulties arose. One man objected to the wording of the document ; others demurred at the attempt to force the King's hand ; Dumouriez was more than lukewarm in the matter, and the project was again abandoned. Some three weeks later it took another shape ; and Roland wrote—or rather signed—the famous letter to Louis, urging him to show himself the King of the Revolution.

It was written by his wife at a single sitting—she was always ready with her pen—and it put the question plainly : did Louis mean to adhere to the constitution or to join with those who pretended to reform it ? For the Declaration of Rights and the French constitution the people were ready to die. The country was not a word, a term—it was a fact, loved for what was suffered for it, for what it had cost, and for what it promised. Enthusiasm

for it grew as it was attacked. The enemies' forces were arrayed against it without, and united with enemies within to assail it. Excitement was growing and, unless confidence in the King were restored, would break forth in fury. The restoration of confidence demanded facts, not professions. A warning followed as to the result of rejecting the two decrees which were the question of the hour, and Louis was told that no method of temporising would avail. "The Revolution has been accomplished in the minds of the nation ; it will be completed at the price of blood if wisdom does not forestall the evils that can still be averted. Force might indeed be used to coerce the Assembly, terror be spread through Paris, but France would make its indignation felt and develop the sombre energy fatal to those who provoke it." The safety of the State and Louis's welfare were bound up together ; the throne was doomed to misfortune did the King not adhere to the constitution, and by uniting with the Assembly carry out the desire of the nation. A little further delay and the people would see in their sovereign the accomplice of the enemy. As citizen and as minister, the letter concluded, it was Roland's duty to use the plain language rarely heard by kings, and he had fulfilled that duty. "Life," he ended, "is nothing to the man who regards his duties as above all else ; after the happiness of having performed them, the greatest good that he can know is to feel that he has discharged them faithfully ; and to do so is an obligation for the public officer."

This, very briefly summarised, was the document drawn up by Madame Roland for her husband's signature—this was the appeal made to Louis. Had he listened to it, had conscience permitted him to take its admonitions to heart, it is possible that even at that stage he might have regained some of the ground he had lost.

Pache, the man trusted by both, was present when the

Rolands read the letter. "It is a bold proceeding," he observed.

"Bold ! no doubt it is bold," was the reply. "It is right and necessary. What matters the rest ?"

On the following day Roland took the letter with him to the meeting of the council, intending to read it aloud in the presence of his colleagues, before placing it in the King's hands. The discussion on the two decrees had been renewed when Louis cut it short by desiring each minister to bring his written opinion to the next meeting of the council-board. That same day Roland sent the King the letter he had prepared. Its effect was soon seen.

"The next day," wrote Madame Roland, "I saw Servan enter my apartment, radiant. 'Congratulate me,' he said. 'I am dismissed.' 'My husband,' I replied, 'will soon share that honour. I am jealous that it has been accorded to you first.'"

The reason of Servan's pre-eminence was explained. He had waited on Louis that morning, to press upon him, as Minister of War, the prompt establishment of the military camp. The King, manifestly displeased, had turned his back upon him, and the interview resulted in the appearance of Dumouriez at the War Office, with orders to take over the direction of affairs.

Hearing what had passed, Roland summoned his colleagues to meet in conference ; it was his wife's opinion—possibly his own—that the more dignified course would be for the patriot ministry to send in their resignations, rather than to await dismissal, expressing their inability to serve with Dumouriez. But the Cabinet was divided against itself, and demurred at Roland's proposal of a joint written remonstrance, preferring to protest by word of mouth. "A step destitute of common sense," observes Madame Roland, "since when it is a question of the forcible expression of disagreeable truths



to a person enjoying, by his position, a right to great consideration, it is more advantageous to do it in writing." Madame Roland, it may be remarked, thought most things were best done by means of pen and ink, and for this there may have been more than one reason. In the end Duranthon was sent for by the King, and when he returned it was to present their discharge to both Roland and Clavière.

"You have kept us waiting for our liberty," said Roland with a laugh as he took the document from his hands. "It is in truth that." "I am dismissed also," he told his wife on his return to the Hôtel Britannique, where she had been waiting for news, her busy brain revolving the most effective fashion of meeting the blow.

The uncertainty and timidity of her husband's colleagues, Clavière and Servan excepted, had been a disappointment to her. Dumouriez she had distrusted from the first, nor did his treachery take her unawares; that men like Duranthon and Lacoste, though of no great weight, should decline to make common cause with their comrades occasioned her a shock. As to the course to be pursued by Roland she had no doubt. Through the indecision of his colleagues he had already forfeited the advantage of sending in a voluntary resignation. It was still in his power to be the first to make the announcement of what had occurred to the Assembly.

"As [the King] has not profited by the lessons contained in your letter," she told him, "those lessons must be rendered of use to the public by being made known. I see nothing more in harmony with the courage of having written it than the boldness of sending a copy to the Assembly. Learning your dismissal, it will see what was the cause of it."

The thing was done, and was attended with entire success. The Assembly declared that the discarded

ministers, Roland, Clavière, and Servan, carried with them the regrets of the nation, ordering that the letter to the King should be printed and sent to the departments. Madame Roland congratulated herself upon her husband's fall. "I had not been proud of his entry upon office ; I was proud of his leaving it." Of the strong feeling aroused by his letter a passage in the memoirs of Barbaroux, not yet acquainted with the writer, is proof. Rebecqui, a friend of Barbaroux's, had conceived himself to have cause of complaint against the Minister of the Interior, but as he read the missive he exclaimed, pressing it to his heart—it was a time of emotion—"I am that man's friend for ever."

Thus ended Roland's—and Madame Roland's—first period of official life.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dumouriez asserts that the communication by Roland of his letter to the Assembly was a dishonourable breach of confidence, since he had expressly assured the King that it was to remain a secret for ever between Louis and himself. The passage referred to is not to be found in the version published in the *Moniteur*; but it is of course possible that it was removed before it was printed.

## CHAPTER XVIII

At the rue de la Harpe—Lafayette's influence declining—Barbaroux and the Rolands—The invasion of the Tuileries—The country declared in danger—Duke of Brunswick's manifesto.

WHEN the Rolands quitted their official residence, it was not to return to the Hôtel Britannique, but to the apartment they had furnished in the rue de la Harpe. Thither Madame Grandchamp hastened—her old affection revived and causes of offence, real or imaginary, forgotten—to offer her sympathy. The visit was not satisfactory. Roland spoke freely of the causes of his dismissal, expressed his opinion of the court, and of the probable consequences of its action. His views and those of his guest were not in accord, and she withdrew, "too much wounded to make for his sake the sacrifice of what I should have to suffer." She never met him again.

From the rue de la Harpe the Rolands looked on, through the hot summer weeks, at what was going forward, wondering whether all had been in vain and whether the old order of things was destined to regain its ascendancy and overcome the forces set loose against it. Could this indeed be so?

The men chosen, from amongst the Feuillants, to replace the late Ministry were of no weight, their very names being now forgotten. Dumouriez was not of their number. His advice to the King had been to dismiss his ministers, and to withdraw his veto from the popular decrees. The priests, he argued, would be safer in



banishment. As to danger from the proposed camp, he could avert it by sending detachments of the troops, as they collected in Paris, to join the army. Louis took his advice so far as the ministers were concerned, but no further, and Dumouriez himself went to join the army.

Meantime, with a flicker of reviving hope, Feuillants and monarchists had united in opposition to the growing menace of the Jacobin Club. Lafayette, from the camp at Mauberge—forgetting that popularity is a passing thing, and with no suspicion that his own was on the wane—wrote in autocratic fashion to the Assembly to denounce the Jacobins; to demand the suppression of all clubs and the independence and safety of the Crown; and, finally, to urge the Assembly itself to abide by law and constitutional methods. The time for Lafayette to make demands was, he was quickly to be shown, gone by. His letter was well meant; as an appeal it might have had some effect. Coming from a man who spoke in the name of the army, it sounded perilously like a threat.

To Roland and his wife, withdrawn from active participation in the struggle, something like chaos must have seemed to prevail. And who was there capable of restoring order, where order was none? Madame Roland, notwithstanding her friendly relations with many of the men brought to the front by the chances of the Revolution, took a pessimistic view of their capacities and abilities; and the mediocrity marking those who had been placed in responsible positions had especially surprised and startled her so soon as she had had an opportunity of forming a judgment of them. With the frankness of a writer whose words will be read only when she is in the grave, she gave expression to her disappointment, adding the naïve confession of a consciousness of her personal superiority. "It was only at that time"—of Roland's ministry—"that I acquired

assurance," she wrote ; "till then I had been as modest as a schoolgirl. I imagined that persons with more decided views than I were also cleverer. I really do not wonder that they liked me. They felt that I had some value. Yet I honestly respected the self-respect of others."

Whether her estimate of the men at the helm was right or wrong, the fact that she had no faith in their efficiency must have gone far to destroy her hopes. Others, too, looked on with sadness and discouragement. Young Barbaroux, come from Marseilles in February, weary of the noise and dissension of the Jacobin Club, weary too of Robespierre's ascendancy there and of his jealousy of any rival, shut himself up with his friend Rebecqui, "measuring the ills of their country and musing upon the means of saving her." Was it possible to save her ?

It was natural that kindred spirits should draw together. At a chance meeting with Roland and Lanthenas in the street, it was arranged that the young southerner should pay a visit to the former on the following day. At the rue de la Harpe he found "the retreat of a philosopher," and there he became acquainted with the philosopher's wife—the "marvellous woman" of whom in his memoirs he promises—an unfulfilled promise—to speak elsewhere. What Madame Roland thought of the young man—he was no more than twenty-five—she has left upon record. With a head of Antinous, he was brave and frank, had the vivacity of the south, was a lover of liberty, proud of the Revolution, a man who liked work and was capable of sustained effort. People insinuated, as was perhaps natural, that in the appreciation of a woman of thirty-eight of a man thirteen years younger there was the element of sentiment. She liked and respected Servan, and the same charge was made. In neither case is there a shadow of evidence to bear out the

assertion ; and if proof of its falsity, in Barbaroux's case, were necessary, it is contained in the fact that the attachment he afterwards developed for Buzot caused Madame Roland to bestow upon the two in jest the names of Nisus and Euryale.

The meeting in the rue de la Harpe was probably the first between Barbaroux and Madame Roland, though a correspondence had been kept up between Roland himself and the young Marseillais during his term of office ; when Barbaroux had remonstrated with the minister upon the severity of his language in dealing with disorders in the south, representing to him that gentler methods would be more successful in recalling the delinquents to obedience. Roland acted upon his advice, "adopted the tone of a brother rather than of an administrator, recaptured the Marseillais, and esteemed Barbaroux."

When she met the wise counsellor of her husband, Madame Roland, remembering his protest, was taken by surprise at the youth of the writer. Young as he was, and with all the fervour and enthusiasm of his years, he had a clear head and an eye to practical methods. At this first interview it would seem to have been chiefly Roland who talked. If the intrigues of the Court were not defeated, he said, liberty was lost. Lafayette was apparently meditating treason in the north ; the army of the centre was disorganised and incapable of facing the enemy ; in six weeks the Austrians might be in Paris. "Shall we then," asked Roland, "have worked for three years at this fairest of Revolutions only to see it overthrown in a day ? If liberty perishes in France, it is lost for ever to the rest of the world. All the hopes of philosophers are destroyed, the cruellest tyranny will oppress the world. Let us prevent this misfortune ; let us arm Paris and the northern departments ; or should they fall, let us carry the statue of liberty to the south and—somewhere—found a colony of the free."



Roland's eyes were wet with tears. Barbaroux and Madame Roland caught the infection of emotion, and they too wept.

Barbaroux had his contribution to make to future possibilities. He was well acquainted with the resources of the south. A map of France was produced ; the three studied it—the man, disappointed and disillusioned, old beyond his years; the woman, strenuous and energetic, refusing to believe in ultimate failure ; and their guest, scarcely emerged from boyhood and with the ardour, the dreams, of boyhood still about him. His country, the south, was zealous in the cause of liberty—"fanaticism, and our faults," he afterwards wrote sadly, "had not yet armed La Vendée"—and its spirit could be utilised in defence of the Revolution.

The interview was the first of many. Servan would sometimes join in discussing ways and means, bringing his military knowledge and experience to bear upon schemes which the confederates themselves must have felt belonged to the counsels of despair. Places, localities, men, favourable to them were noted. Surely, should the worst come to the worst, something could be saved out of the wreck.

"It will be our *pis-aller*," Barbaroux would say with a smile, "but the Marseillais who are here will prevent our being forced to have recourse to it."

For Barbaroux, hot and impetuous, had taken measures to coerce the Court ; he had written to ask Marseilles to send six hundred men to Paris "who knew how to die," and Marseilles sent them.

This, however, was later. The Marseillais did not reach the capital till towards the end of July. More than a month earlier the great demonstration of June 20 had taken place, when the united sections of Paris marched in their thousands to present their petition and protest to the Assembly and to solicit the recall of the patriot Ministry, denouncing the inactivity of the armies,

and demanding that if the cause of that inactivity was found to lie with the executive power—in other words, with the King—the executive power should be destroyed.

The invasion of the Tuileries, with its tumultuous scenes, came next ; Louis, face to face with the insurgent populace, had the opportunity of measuring the strength of the forces arrayed against him and the spirit by which they were inspired. It is not necessary to dwell upon occurrences familiar to every reader. It was demonstrated once for all—that fact so difficult for those hedged in with the tradition of centuries to grasp or understand—that royalty stood stripped of its sanctity in the eyes of the crowd, that the intangible shield and defence of inherited prestige was not shaken, but shattered. Louis, the red cap on his head, the courage of his race suddenly apparent in countenance, speech, and bearing, was no more to the excited and turbulent mass who had penetrated to his presence than a public servant—their representative—charged with unfaithfulness.

The day, like others, drew to an end. Deputies, Vergniaud amongst them, Pétion the mayor, had hurried to the palace to protect and defend it against the mob. The multitude, having made its demands, having had them refused with dignity and calm, swept out the way that they had come. But a memorable and significant development of the situation had taken place, a prelude and omen of what was to follow.

What followed first was, however, a species of reaction called forth by chivalrous indignation at the insults offered to decadent royalty, an indignation not only felt by its loyal adherents, but by the constitutionalists, who continued to regard Louis as the head of the State. To all, likewise, who desired a peaceful solution of the present difficulties, the weapons of the mob were repugnant. Had Louis even now been disposed to co-operate heartily with the parties who would have combined in opposition



to the extremists, something might have been done ; but he was fixing his hopes more and more upon foreign intervention, and feared to commit himself to the constitutionalists and their methods. Lafayette, who, quitting his post with the army, hurried, full of indignation, to Paris to demand the chastisement of the rioters and the suppression of the Jacobins, met with a cool reception, nor were his endeavours to rally the National Guard for the King's defence seconded by the Court. He had attempted a bold game, at no little risk to himself. He had failed, and returned to the camp defeated.

The question remained, what was to be done ? The answer could not be postponed, if a successful opposition was to be made to the foreign foe whose preparations were going actively forward. Invasion was imminent—so much was plain to men of whatever faction. To the royalists its success meant deliverance ; to all sections of the revolutionist party ruin. Was the King in league with the enemy ? It could hardly be doubted. Yet when Vergniaud made his speech in the debate on the question whether the country should be formally declared in danger and measures taken accordingly, his denunciation of Louis's attitude was still couched in the language of hypothesis. Should the King have offered opposition to the steps necessary for the national safety, should this be the case, he painted the consequences in words applicable to a man who violated the constitution and betrayed his people. Most of those who heard him must have been convinced that they were applicable to Louis. Brissot shortly after spoke in the same sense, and without veiling his meaning by conventional respect. The Tuileries, he said, was the centre of the plots and conspiracies devised against the nation. Strike a blow at the palace, and all would be reached.

The immediate purpose of the patriots was served ; the country was declared, in the prescribed formula,



to be in danger, citizens were called upon to take up arms in its defence, and an outburst of enthusiasm was the result. Battalions of volunteers were enrolled, a camp was formed at Soissons. Men like Barbaroux quitted their quasi-retirement and threw themselves into the work of organising resistance to the Court. His visits to the Rolands almost ceased. By words he had let drop they divined that he was preparing an insurrection, but asked no question. When he begged them, should he absent himself altogether, not to misjudge his motives—he would be deterred from coming solely by the fear of compromising them—they were sure that their surmise had been correct.

So the July days went by. The 14th had been fixed for a fresh federation meeting on the Champs de Mars ; it was thinly attended. Perhaps anniversaries were growing common. Some bodies of federates, nevertheless, tramped up from the provinces, bringing with them their protests or petitions, mostly urging *déchéance* or suspension for the King. *Déchéance*, Brissot too would have liked, including perhaps a reversion of the Crown to the little heir, with a patriot regency to carry on the government. How the government was carried on, even nominally, in these days it is difficult to say. On July 10 the helpless Ministry had resigned in a body, the Girondists looking grimly on at the collapse of their successors, self-convicted of failure.

Had the fire of popular excitement needed fuel to keep it ablaze, it was supplied by the manifesto issued by the Duke of Brunswick. Let the French people rally round him and round the emigrants, let them return to their duty and to the King who had sworn they should be happy. Let the Assembly maintain cities and fortresses intact, till the Duke should take them over. Those who resisted were to be treated as traitors, and any insult or injury to the King or his removal

from Paris was to be avenged on the capital by military execution. So ran the document. It was not to be wondered at that popular excitement was raised to fever pitch, or that the cry for *déchéance* grew louder and louder.

On July 29 Barbaroux's body of Marseillais—the men who knew how to die—had arrived, and as Barbaroux met them at Charenton he dreamt, with the optimism of twenty-five, of a Paris which should rise with one accord to join them and of the bloodless establishment of a republic.

Turning to the Rolands themselves, it appears that they decided at this time upon leaving Paris, since on July 26 Roland demanded the necessary permission from the Assembly and about a week later received it. If Madame Roland is to be believed, neither she nor her husband were aware of what was in preparation. "All the world is acquainted with the revolution of August 10," she writes. "On this subject I know no more than the public. Conversant with the great current of affairs so long as Roland was a public man, and following it with interest even when he was no longer in office, I was never the confidant of what may be called small manœuvres, nor was he an agent in affairs of the kind."

It may be true that she knew nothing definite ; with others of her friends, as with Barbaroux, she may have displayed the wise discretion of silence, whatever suspicions she entertained. It is difficult to believe that the events of that day took her altogether by surprise.

## CHAPTER XIX

August 10—Roland recalled to office—The new Cabinet—Danton's position in it—Madame Roland and Danton—Her wish to see Marat—Rapid enactments—The invading forces—Terror in Paris—The September massacres.

ON August 10 Roland was recalled to office. Accepting his wife's assertion that with the insurrection of that memorable day neither had been directly concerned, it was nevertheless in full accordance with the principle they held and had held for long as to the right and the duty of the people to use force, should other means fail, to safeguard the country from foes within and without. In a letter to Brissot—analysed at length by Sainte-Beuve, but now lost—Madame Roland had demanded with violence the King's provisional suspension, had protested against the inaction of the Assembly, and had criticised Brissot's policy. Passing in review "the illustrious and brotherly group surrounded, from a distance, with a single aureole," she had pointed out the deficiencies of each member of it. Finding it vain to seek a man truly fitted in her eyes to be the leader in the approaching crisis, she fell back, in spite of his lack of not a few important qualifications, upon Brissot, and called upon him to play that part.

The letter was written on July 31, not a fortnight before the decisive blow was struck, and, maddened with anger and fear combined—fear of the foreign enemy, anger at the inaction of the Government—the populace took the law into its own hands. An incompetent if not



traitorous administration must be replaced by one more trustworthy ; the King must be removed from his position at the head of the executive. The sections of Paris were unanimous and prepared to enforce their opinion. By Thursday, August 9, the crisis was imminent, and the royalists were making ready for defence. That night delegates from each section arrived at the Hôtel de Ville, and, with the exception of three of its members—Pétion, Manuel, and Danton—ousted the municipality ; replacing it by a body of men who, under the name of the Commune, would not hesitate or delay to proceed to extremities. The insurrection was to take place, and at once.

By the morning the first blood had been shed—that of Mandat, commanding the Guards. Committed to prison by the new power on suspicion of an intention to oppose armed resistance to the popular will, he was torn from his escort and murdered by the mob on the steps of the Hôtel de Ville. How the day ended all know. The Swiss, like Barbaroux's Marseillais, showed that they knew how to die ; the Assembly—the Constitutionalist members having withdrawn—passed the decree moved by Vergniaud declaring the King suspended and calling for a National Convention. Before twenty-four hours had gone by the patriot Cabinet was reinstated, and Roland was once more Minister of the Interior.

He entered upon office with fresh hope. The two of his former colleagues, Clavière and Servan, who, with him, had been uncompromising in their dealings with Louis, filled their old posts ; three new ministers replaced those who had proved untrustworthy. These were Monge, Lebrun, and Danton. Of the two first there is little to say, save that, well-intentioned and not otherwise than upright, they were totally unfitted by experience, character, or talents to be entrusted with a share in the Government. Le Brun, at the Foreign Office, was of no weight or

influence ; Monge, at the Marine, who had begun life as a stone-cutter and was a mathematician of some merit, was incapable of lending any assistance in governing the State. Danton was Minister of Justice ; and Danton was hated and distrusted by Madame Roland. Had that hatred and distrust its share in moulding and shaping events ? Danton at this time would seem to have been genuinely anxious for union between the sections of the revolutionist party ; but if Madame Roland's sentiments were shared by the Girondist leaders, co-operation was hardly possible.

Her increasing power over the men of her party is proved as much by the envenomed animosity of her enemies as by the affection and admiration of her friends. The detestation exhibited in the ribald abuse of such men as Marat and, later on, Hébert is no less a witness to it than the tribute paid by Louvet de Couvray when, in the passion of grief roused by her execution, he declared that her least merit was to have united in her person all the graces, the charm, and the virtues of a woman, whilst her rare talents and virile qualities would have done honour to the greatest men. Nominally no more than the wife of a public official, it is impossible to dissociate her from Roland's ministerial work, or to exempt her from responsibility for his actions. More and more—perhaps inwardly conscious of his insufficiency for his post or for dealing with the wildness of the storm that was gathering—he appears to have leant upon the genius, the shrewd brain, and clear judgment of his wife for support and co-operation. In times of peace he might have made an admirable head of a department of state, orderly, industrious, just, indefatigable in industry, unassailable in his disinterested integrity. But, a pedant with a touch of sentimentality, he was totally devoid of the flashes of insight, the rapidity of decision, and the readiness of resource indispensable to the man who is to act with firmness on an emergency.



For these qualities, combined with her facile pen and her gift of language, he depended upon his wife. "Je choque moins et je pénètre mieux," she once said, comparing the methods in which she and her husband—agreed in principle—differed. It is hard to believe that he would have been capable of withstanding her influence to the point of carrying into effect a line of action she disapproved. It is also hard to believe that he would have remained uninfected by a prejudice so strong as that she entertained with regard to his powerful colleague.

Whether she was right or wrong in her estimate of a man upon whom, during the last hundred years, the verdicts pronounced have been so many and various is another question. The horror and disgust with which Danton inspired her, her readiness to believe him to be evil incarnate, the very exaggeration of her condemnation, are a warning against accepting her statements in their unmodified crudity. If those statements were made at a date when she was justified in regarding Danton as an enemy, when the September massacres and other events for which she held him responsible had fortified her case against him, when more than any other man he had compassed the downfall of the Girondist party and of all she held dear, it would appear that her loathing had been scarcely less pronounced at a time that she knew him by sight and by reputation alone. The personal prejudice proclaiming her, in spite of masculine powers and gifts, a woman, proved her unfit to assist in steering the vessel of state at a moment of supreme danger and difficulty. Her imprudence in making her sentiments known is further evidence of her complete lack of the necessary qualifications.

"What a pity," she observed to some members of the Assembly with whom she was discussing her husband's colleague, "that the Ministry should be spoilt by such a man! Whence did they bring him?"



What would she have ? asked her friends. Danton was at the head of a party of snarlers, and were he not employed in the machinery of government he would be opposed to it. Also he had served the Revolution, and might still be of use.

"I doubt it," she persisted, "and your policy seems to me detestable. It is better to have an enemy outside than within." Nor was she to be convinced by the plea that men like Danton must be given place and ease, in order that, their self-love flattered and their ambition satisfied, it should be to their interest to maintain the present condition of things. Danton, it was added, was not devoid of intelligence, and would do well.

"I hope so," returned Madame Roland ; "and since he is unknown to me, I will not allow myself to judge him. But you are sufficiently my friends for me to tell you that you reason politically like little boys."

Every one laughed. Yet, had they known it, it was no laughing matter. Had Madame Roland been ready to make common cause with Danton, the course of the Revolution might have been different. "I know of but one character in that set," says Mr. Belloc, "which could have prevented Danton's ascendancy and have met his ugly strength by a force as determined and more refined. Roland's wife might have done it ; but though she was the soul of the Ministry, she was hardly a minister, and being a woman, she was confined to secondary and indirect methods. Her hatred of Danton increased to bitterness as she saw him succeed, but she could not intervene, and France was saved from the beauty and the ideals which might have been the syrens of her shipwreck." As it was, the strong man and the brilliant woman were probably each conscious of the latent antagonism of the other ; and, Madame Roland proving irreconcilable, a trial of strength was inevitable. In that struggle Danton was the victor, and the Girondists fell.

During the weeks succeeding August 10 and before the massacres of September had marked the wide divergence between men ostensibly in accord, Madame Roland was afforded full opportunities of improving her acquaintance with the Minister of Justice. The Council met at the Hôtel of the Interior, and on one pretext or another Danton constantly sought the wife of the minister in her private apartments.

Speculating afterwards upon the motive of his frequent visits, Madame Roland hazarded the hypothesis that he might have wished to study and sound the woman known to exercise so strong an influence not only over Roland but over the Girondist party as a whole, and to weigh the chances of obtaining her co-operation. If this was so, he must quickly have decided that no assistance was to be expected from her, and that she was not disposed to become a link between himself and the Gironde in general or her husband in particular. Intercourse with him did not tend to modify her judgment, and she was increasingly convinced that it was impossible that Roland and he could work together. To dominate or to ruin the Minister of the Interior—these were the alternatives she imagined that he set before him; with regard to herself, recognising her as *honnête femme*, he would perceive that his policy lay in rendering her the object of envy or of calumny, dread or ridicule.

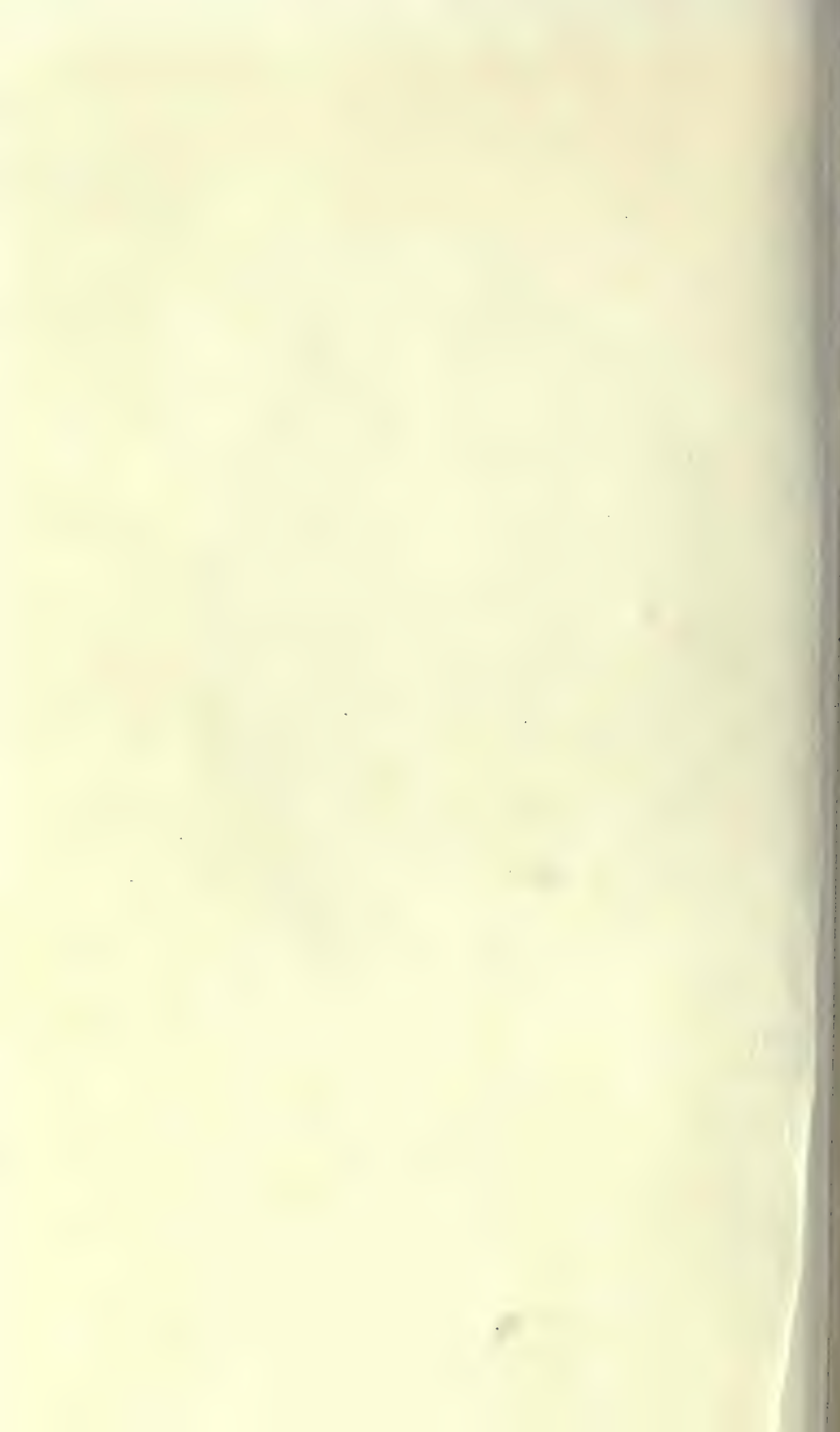
With another of the foes soon to be ranged against her Madame Roland had never come into actual contact. This was Marat, leader and representative of a force of which it was difficult to gauge the limits. If the King was a prisoner in the Temple, and no longer able to hamper the action of the ministers and render their measures inoperative, a more formidable power had suddenly sprung up, which, destitute and heedless of legal sanction, was a menace and a rival to any other.



JEAN PAUL MARAT.

From an engraving.





The improvised Commune, with Marat, Robespierre, and other recruits from the Jacobin Club added to its original members, had an ally in Danton, nor was Roland the man to curb and control its arbitrary authority.

Marat was already in conflict with the Minister of the Interior. In his capacity of guardian of law and order, rigid and uncompromising in his honesty, Roland had objected to the forcible seizure by the demagogue of the Crown printing presses as indemnification for those confiscated from himself at an earlier date ; and had likewise refused the unconditional grant of 15,000 livres demanded by Marat for publishing purposes, insisting that the proposed works should be submitted to the Council before they were printed at the public expense. In the end Roland was only successful in making a dangerous enemy ; and Marat obtained the funds he required, his application being referred by the Council to Danton. By these means the more timid members of the Council eluded the responsibility involved in any misuse of public money, whilst Danton, in Madame Roland's words, was provided with a fresh means of attaching "that mad dog" to himself.

It was characteristic of her that she had a desire to see the mad dog. "Bring that personage to visit me," she said to Danton one day when Marat had been the subject of conversation.

Danton demurred. "You would not get two words out of him," he told her.

"What does that matter ? I should see him," was her reply. It was well, she explains, to be acquainted with monsters, and she was curious to find out whether he had a disordered brain or was merely "un mannequin bien soufflé."

Her curiosity was not destined to be satisfied. Danton excused himself from effecting the desired introduction. She would only see an original, he told her,

and to no purpose ; and, shrewdly suspecting that however much she pressed the matter he would adhere to his refusal, she passed it over as if her suggestion had been made in jest.

In the meantime Roland, working day and night, was doing what man—official, laborious, conscientious man—could do to reduce chaos to order. In what had occurred on August 10 there was nothing, save the manner in which the Revolution had been effected, that he could not approve ; and in the report he subsequently presented to the Assembly upon the condition of Paris, he paid a tribute to the zeal displayed by the Commune and the purpose it had served. At the same time he was painfully and acutely alive to the danger involved in lawless methods. Anarchy was in his eyes as incompatible with justice and order as tyranny itself. His wife, for her part, would have liked the Commune to have been dissolved, a municipality to be legally elected, and the public forces put on a proper footing under a duly appointed commander. Unless it should prove possible to curb the power of the new body, it was clear that the law would be a dead letter and the Convention now to assemble would be subordinated to it. Affairs being in their present condition, she would have preferred to see Roland a deputy rather than that he should occupy the position of a minister deprived of the means of enforcing measures he considered necessary.

Decrees were being hastily passed ; the traces of the former state of things were daily obliterated. On August 16 all non-juring priests who should not have left the kingdom within a fortnight were sentenced to deportation to French Guiana, those over sixty or infirm remaining in France shut up and under supervision. On the 17th a new Criminal Tribunal was appointed for the trial of crimes committed on August 10 or connected with the events of that day, those accused being granted



no more than twelve hours for the examination of the lists of the witnesses against them, with three to raise objections to jurors. They were also deprived of the right of "recours au cassation." Capital punishment was to be lavishly applied, the death penalty being extended to the wearing of cockades other than the tricolour. On August 18 all religious congregations, clerical or secular, were suppressed. Seigneurial rights, though guaranteed by the Constitutional Assembly, were abrogated; the property of disturbers of the peace was declared forfeited. Such were a few of the multitude of enactments made during those weeks of agitation, when tidings from the frontier were maintaining the excitement in the capital at fever heat. Nothing, said Brissot in reference to the Criminal Tribunal, remained to be desired in point of rapidity or justice. The words are evidence of the condition of mind of men as far removed as he from the violence of the demagogue. There was no time to weigh the rights of individuals. The very existence of the country was at stake. Traitors—or men stigmatised as traitors—were conspiring at home; the foreign enemy was advancing towards Paris. Longwy had fallen; Verdun was menaced. Every day fresh subjects of alarm were calling forth additional summary decrees.

In the garden of the Minister of Public Affairs the six ministers, met informally to consider the news of the capture of Longwy, were watched by Fabre d'Eglantine, disciple and friend of Danton. Roland, pale and broken, leant his head against a tree, as he expressed his opinion that the Government must leave Paris, and, carrying the King with them, seek refuge at Blois.

Servan and Clavière agreed with him. Kersaint, fresh from Sedan, was of the same mind. The Duke of Brunswick would reach the capital in a fortnight. Nothing else could be done. Then Danton spoke.

"My mother is seventy," he said; "I have brought her to Paris. I brought my children yesterday. If the Prussians are to enter, I hope it may be into a Paris burnt down by torches." Then, turning to Roland, "Take care not to talk too much about flight. The people might hear you," he said.

It was one of the scoffs which leave a sting behind and are not forgotten. But the ministry stayed in Paris. To Bancal Madame Roland wrote a few lines—even she could find time for no more—the arrival of the enemy was expected. She did not fear them, "because I have made my calculations upon life and I despise death; but I am in hell when the march is not made swiftly, firmly, and the blow is not struck straight and strong."

Simultaneously with the Prussian successes the smouldering discontent of La Vendée had burst into flame, suggesting the possibility of rebellion elsewhere; and Danton, as Minister of Justice, demanded and obtained the power of instituting domiciliary visits, for the purpose of seizing any weapons that could be found and of arresting suspected persons. Were there thirty thousand to be arrested it must be done, and at once, he declared; and he received the necessary authorisation. A Committee of Surveillance had been appointed and sat at the Commune, a menace to all who had enemies to denounce them.

On Sunday, September 2, came the fall of Verdun; rumour, in advance of the fact, having spread the tidings of the disaster in Paris some hours before its actual occurrence. The blow gave rise to a species of frenzy—the frenzy due to fear and rage combined—in the capital. Crowds thronged the Champs de Mars, seeking to be enrolled for the national defence; Marat was planning his sinister methods of meeting the crisis and making use of the passions it had called into play. Danton's voice made itself heard above the tumult, not



even now acknowledging that the situation was desperate. "De l'audace, encore de l'audace, toujours de l'audace, et la France est sauvée," he told the terror-stricken Assembly in words that have been well remembered.

Into the terrible scenes disgracing the following days—from that Sunday evening till the Thursday—scenes which have turned the sympathy of many, at the time and since, into horror, when, a prey to panic and terror, Paris looked on in apathy or stupor at the massacres in the prisons, it is unnecessary to enter. The tale, in its horrible details, has been recounted again and again, and is familiar to all. For Madame Roland's biographer, regarding her as in some sort one with her husband and a sharer in his responsibility, the question resolves itself into the part played by the Minister of the Interior in respect to what was done. Could he afterwards, with a clear conscience, declare himself guiltless? This question demands an answer here, for it may be taken for granted that he did not act without the approval and concurrence of his wife.

That both looked on with loathing at the atrocities committed during those four days of bloodshed has never been doubted, save by writers in whose eyes sympathy with the Revolution is sufficient to convict a man of every attribute of evil. It remains to ask whether Roland did all that was possible, all that it was the bounden duty of a man holding his post to do, to put an end to the outbreak of savage fury, and to what extent he afterwards expressed his abhorrence of what had taken place. It is also necessary to examine into his position at the time and the amount of the power he possessed of enforcing the observance of his orders.

As August had drawn towards a close the ascendancy of the Commune in Paris, of Danton in the Council of State, had been established to a greater and greater extent. Danton's visits to Madame Roland had ceased. Sincerely



anxious as he proved himself of establishing a basis of co-operation with the Girondists, he may have become sufficiently aware of her sentiments where he was concerned to relinquish the idea of making her his agent of conciliation. He may also have felt that, should their paths diverge, he was now the stronger, and could afford to dispense with Girondist support. Over the Council, as well as outside it, his strenuous activity and energy rendered him dominant. He knew how to utilise each opportunity of gaining fresh influence; and, profiting by the absorption of his colleagues in the duties of their departments, was enlarging the scope and compass of his authority by obtaining the appointment of men devoted to himself to provincial posts.

The condition of alarm and excitement produced in Paris by military reverses had been, in Madame Roland's opinion, deliberately fostered by men who perceived in it the means to their end and desired to move the populace to wreak vengeance on those they regarded as a danger at home. Noting the temper of the mob, she states that Roland had taken what measures he could to keep it in check. They were the measures of a man who can indeed issue orders, but has no certainty that they will be obeyed and no power of enforcing obedience. On the morning of September 2, Grandpré, the Inspector of Prisons—nominated to the office by Roland on the recommendation of Madame Grandchamp—had found a general panic prevailing. He had done what was possible to effect the release of some of the captives, to calm the fears of others, and had then come to the Hôtel of the Interior to await the breaking-up of the Council. As Danton, first to leave the council-chamber, appeared, he made his report to him, explained what Roland had done, as Minister of the Interior—his recommendations of vigilance to the Commune, his orders to Santerre, commanding the National Guard, to fortify

the posts and watch over the prisons<sup>1</sup>—and called upon Danton, as Minister of Justice, to take steps to ensure the safety of the prisoners. According to Madame Roland, Danton, making an answer equivalent to saying that the prisoners might take care of themselves, passed on his way. Upon Santerre, as chief military authority, Roland, for his part, devolved the responsibility of keeping order, placarding—though probably not until September 4—the communication containing his orders upon the street walls, thus hoping to move the citizens, should the General fail to do his duty, to perform it themselves. Having done what he could, he repaired to the office of the Marine, where the Council of State was to hold a second meeting.<sup>2</sup>

His wife had stayed at home, and gives an account of what followed at the Hôtel of the Interior. It was five o'clock on the evening of that Sunday, and, though she did not know it, the massacres were beginning, when she became aware of a tumult outside, and looking down into the courtyard, perceived that a crowd made up of some two hundred men had collected there and were demanding to be admitted to the presence of the minister. Refusing to accept the assurances of the servants that he was not at home, they were noisily insisting upon an interview, when Madame Roland gave orders that ten of their number should be admitted to her presence; proceeding to question them calmly upon the reason of their visit.

Their answer was ready. As good citizens, they desired to go to meet the enemy at Verdun, and had come to seek the minister and to obtain the weapons they lacked. They had been to the War Office, at

<sup>1</sup> These documents have not been discovered, Roland's first letter extant to Santerre being dated September 4.

<sup>2</sup> It is after this second meeting of the Council that Mr. Beesly makes Grandpré's interview with Danton take place,



which Madame Roland recommended them to apply, and had been told that no arms were to be had there. All the ministers were traitors, and they wanted Roland.

"I am sorry that he is out," Madame Roland answered courteously, "as he would convince you by good reasons of the truth. Come and visit the office with me. You will see that he is not there, that it contains no arms, and you will reflect that there are not likely to be any there. Return to the War Office, or make your just complaints to the Commune. If you wish to speak to Roland, go to the office of the Marine. All the Council is there assembled."

When she had dismissed the deputation, it must have been with some uneasiness that she watched the scene in the courtyard below. A stump orator in his shirt, with the sleeves turned up and brandishing a sabre, was denouncing to his comrades the treason of the minister. At length, however, it was decided that nothing more could be done, and the two hundred poured out, leaving the courtyard deserted and Madame Roland at liberty to seek her husband and inform him of what had occurred.

Meantime, a curious scene had taken place at the Marine, where the recently appointed Committee of Surveillance, chiefly occupied with ordering arrests, was sitting, and where Danton was at the moment, having just been reconciled to Marat after a quarrel, real or pretended, of twenty-four hours. Taking Pétion (still mayor) apart, he spoke to him privately. "Do you know what they have done?" he asked. "They have sent out a warrant for Roland's arrest."

"Who has done that?" inquired Pétion.

"Eh, this rabid Committee. I have taken possession of the warrant. Here it is; we cannot allow it. *Diable!*—a member of the Council!"



Pétion read the document and gave it back. "Let it be," he said with a smile; "it will have a good effect."

Danton looked at him inquiringly. "A good effect!" he repeated. "Oh! I will not permit it. I will put sense into them"; and the warrant was not served. The question has been raised whether the whole incident was not the outcome of Madame Roland's imaginative faculty, Danton and Pétion having been alone when the conversation she records took place. But Pétion was Roland's friend and comrade, and there is no reason to doubt that he may have given her an account of what had occurred.

Strange though it may seem, it was not until the morning of the following day, Monday, September 3, that it became known at the Hôtel of the Interior what had passed in the prisons during the hours of the past night. Helpless to stop the massacres, as he had been powerless to prevent them, it only remained for Roland, ostensibly responsible for the preservation of order, to denounce the crimes committed; and though aware of the danger involved, in the present condition of public sentiment, Madame Roland was at one with him in feeling that this must be done. He was already hated, so she told him, because he had tried to place obstacles in the way of the excesses; he must now make himself feared. For Roland to make himself feared was not at that moment easy. His wife had, as always, a firm belief in the power of the pen; and Roland wrote his letter of protest to the Assembly—a document which, though it may seem almost criminal in its moderation, was sufficient to draw down upon him the enmity of the comparatively few perpetrators of the atrocities, as well as of the many who condoned them.

"Yesterday," he wrote in the course of his protest, "was a day over the events of which it is perhaps necessary to draw a veil. I know that the people,

terrible in vengeance, have shown a kind a justice. They do not make victims of all who fall into their hands ; they take those they believe have been too long spared by the law, and whom they are convinced, in the present danger, should be sacrificed without delay." But an outbreak liable to abuse must be stopped. France must receive the assurance that the Executive was unable to foresee and prevent the excesses committed, and the authorities must put an end to what was still proceeding. Turning to the personal question, he said he was aware of the peril to which he was exposed by this declaration. Let his life be forfeited. He desired to preserve it only for the service of liberty and equality.

The tone of moderation, the tribute to the justice of the people, is not the language that should have been applied to the band of assassins who were, even when the letter was written, at their evil work. Yet, apart from motives of prudence, Roland may have conceived that his appeal to the Assembly was likely to have the more effect by reason of its unanswerable character. As a matter of fact it was read by that body—scarcely less helpless than the minister—with applause, was printed and placarded ; and no effective measures were taken to stop the massacres.

The astonishing thing, to those who look back, is that life seems to have been carried on during those days of horror almost as usual. The theatres were open ; and on September 3rd—the day when Roland's protest was made, there was a dinner party at the Hôtel of the Interior. Uninvited, Cloots, little known to the hostess, had been brought thither by another of the guests ; and some one present whispered a warning in her ear. An intolerable parasite, she was told, had been introduced into her house whom the speaker was sorry to see there. Before long she must have shared the regret ; for the newcomer, discussing the events of the day, characterised

them as necessary and salutary. The vengeance of the people, he said, was just, and conducive to the happiness of humanity.

As the massacres continued, bitterness of spirit, edged by profound disappointment, took possession of Madame Roland. It was not so much the brutality, the savagery of the few actually concerned in the butchery, as the apathetic inaction of the mass of citizens that roused her to fierce and impotent indignation. "All Paris," she wrote, "was a witness of these horrible scenes, performed by a small number of executioners . . . all Paris let them go on; all Paris became accursed in my eyes, and I no longer hope that liberty will be established in the midst of cowards insensible to the last outrages that can be offered to nature, to humanity—cold spectators of deeds that the courage of fifty armed men could have easily prevented."

The beauty and the splendour of the dawn of liberty had been overcast. For Madame Roland the Revolution was never wholly to recover from the injury done it by the September days. "You know my enthusiasm for the Revolution," she wrote to Bancal. "Well, I am ashamed of it; it is stained by these wretches. It has become hideous."



## CHAPTER XX

Madame Roland's horror of the massacres—Marat's attacks—the National Convention elected—Dumouriez's successes—Roland in office—The opinions of foreigners—Buzot in Paris—Breach with Lanthenas.

THE real tragedy of Madame Roland's life began with the September massacres. The Revolution, as she had imagined it, had been her idol, the materialisation of a dream. She had toiled in its service, rendered it her own in the sense that sacrifices made and service given, gladly and willingly, confer ownership. And now it was defaced in her eyes, stained and marred. She had not anticipated, asked for, peace; nor had she shrunk from the thought of bloodshed, should bloodshed be necessary for the furtherance of aims and objects which were worth it. "I weep for the blood that has been spilt," she wrote to Bosc in January 1791, when there had been an encounter between the people and the military forces; "one cannot be too jealous of human blood. But I am glad that there is danger. I see no other means to spur you on." And in a letter to Bancal in the following May the same note is sounded. "It would be folly to expect peace," she then wrote; "we are vowed to disturbances for all this generation, and they will be less dangerous than security. Adversity forms nations, like individuals; and civil war itself, horrible as it may be, would advance the regeneration of our character and morals. We must be prepared for everything, even to meet death without regret, for from the blood of the good would spring a strong

hatred of the passions that shed it and enthusiasm for the virtues of which an example had been set."

To see innocent blood shed by men nominally enlisted on the side of liberty, to watch justice turned into an excuse for butchery, was a different matter, and was to reverse the picture she had painted and to darken its colours for ever. No true reconstruction of a shattered ideal is possible. Repair it as you may, it has lost its spontaneity and grace, and has become the work of men's hands, bearing upon it the fingermarks of the manufacturer. More fitted, it may be, in some ways to take its place in a work-a-day world, it is permanently stripped of its glamour and enchantment.

The Revolution, nevertheless, was a fact ; and, notwithstanding its blemishes, a fact to be made the best of, to be worked for and served. The foreign enemy had to be resisted, some sort of order maintained in the capital, the revolted provinces to be dealt with and reduced to submission—a task the difficulty of which was enhanced by the cleavage, now definite and undisguised, in the republican ranks.

Roland's protest, mildly as it had been worded, had set him in express opposition to men who, if not directly responsible for the outbreak of brutality, had fostered the spirit which had led to it, had given their sanction to lawless methods, and were not disposed by open condemnation to dissociate themselves from the party of violence fast becoming dominant in the city. It had been no mere declamatory figure of speech when the Minister of the Interior had alluded to the risk his modified denunciation might invoke. "We are under the knife of Robespierre and Marat," wrote Madame Roland on September 5, and she believed what she said. Should the departments not furnish a guard for the Assembly and the Council, she added, both would be lost, and she begged Bancal, on the pretext of danger

from external foes, to do his best to have it supplied without delay. "We are only waiting," she repeated, "to become the victims of this fierce tribunal," composed of Danton, Marat, and Robespierre. The infamous circular—afterwards disavowed by some of the men whose signatures it bore—boasting of the action taken by Paris, and commending its example to other cities, had been dispatched to the provinces; and with this endorsement of the butchery by the Committee of Surveillance, nothing can have seemed beyond the limits of what was possible. In Madame Roland's eyes Danton was supreme in power, Robespierre his puppet, whilst Marat held his torch and his poignard. The semblance of peace between the conflicting parties was at an end, and the streets of Paris were placarded with Marat's attacks upon Roland and his wife, attributed by the latter to Danton's hostility.

"It is Danton *tout pur*," she told her husband, her inveterate hatred finding vent. "He wishes to attack you, and begins by prowling around you. With all his cleverness, he is fool enough to imagine that I shall be wounded by these follies and shall take up my pen to reply to them—that he will have the satisfaction of introducing a woman upon the scene, and thus throwing ridicule upon the public man with whom I am connected. These people may have some idea of my capacities—they are not able to judge of my spirit. Let them slander me as much as they please—they will neither induce me to stir, to make any complaint, nor to pay heed to them."

Silence was indeed the only dignified reply to Marat's insolent and scurrilous attacks. Roland was an *endormeur*, "nothing but a *frère coupe-choux*, whom his wife led by the ear." She it was who was Minister of the Interior, under the direction of the *illuminé*, Lanthenas. Again, in "a word to the woman Roland," she was requested not to squander the goods of the nation in hiring *mouchards* to tear down the placards of *L'Ami du Peuple*.



On September 13 a placard of Roland's was posted as a reply to Marat's assaults. He may have been right in believing that, definite charges having been made against a public officer, it was neither prudent nor politic, in the disorganised state of affairs, to leave them unrefuted. The present document not only gave a summary of his life, character, and principles, but dealt with Marat's objects and aims as he conceived them; his reference to the massacres was a practical repetition of what he had said before: "I admired August 10; I shuddered at the events following upon September 2. I gave full weight to what was produced by the patience—long and deceived—of the people, and by their justice. I was not hasty in blaming a terrible initial movement. I thought it necessary to prevent it from continuing, and that those who had worked to prepare it had been deluded by their imagination or by cruel and ill-intentioned men." To blacken the Assembly, to create a revolt, to excite the fears of the populace with regard to the Ministry, to represent that body as treacherous, to spread abroad distrust, and to point to a dictator—these, he declared, were the objects of *L'Ami du Peuple*. He had taken up the glove thrown down by the demagogue; nor was Marat a man to forgive or forget the attack made upon him.

As the days went by, hope was reviving in Madame Roland. The elections for the National Convention were taking place; and if Paris had chosen its representatives ill, the Girondists were in a large majority elsewhere. In hurried notes reflecting the agitation and excitement of the hour and contrasting with the long letters of former days, she kept Bancal informed of what went on. "I have not time to live," she wrote, "but I have always time to love."

Bancal himself had been elected by the Puy de Dôme. Couthon—so far an ally of the Gironde—was his colleague. It was a time when a man's future was difficult

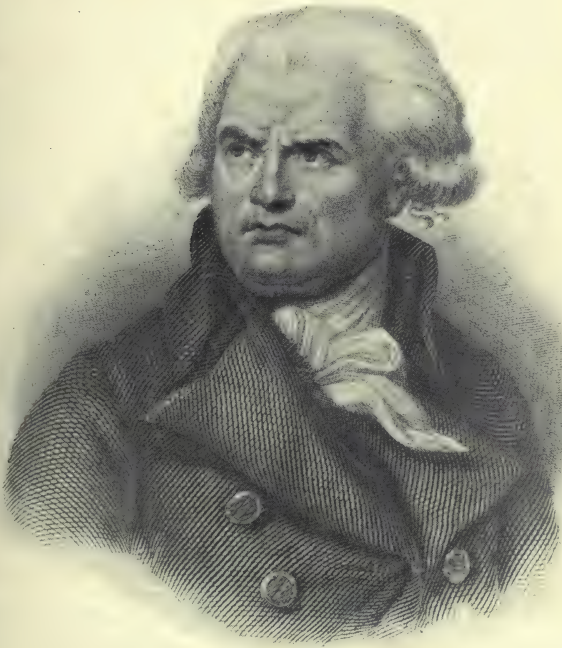
to forecast. The formal opening of the Convention on September 21 brought hope to the sanguine. The inaugural debate was fruitful in decrees. The sovereignty of the people was proclaimed ; the sacredness of property was affirmed and royalty abolished. The Convention had lost no time in getting to work.

Almost simultaneously came good news from the army, under the command of Dumouriez. The Prussians, encouraged by the emigrants, had embarked on their adventure with a light heart. Surprised at the obstinacy of the resistance he met, provided with insufficient supplies, and with disease amongst his troops, Brunswick counselled retreat. By September 30 the invaders were retracing their steps ; by the end of October they had crossed the Rhine. The siege of Lille was soon to be raised, Custine to become master of Trèves, Spire, and Mentz ; the attempt of foreign Powers to overthrow the Republic was a failure.

For some days it had been uncertain whether Roland would continue at his post or resign his office in favour of the seat in the Convention to which he had been elected by the department of Somme, he himself being inclined for a time towards the last alternative. Debate waxed hot in the Convention on the question whether or not pressure should be brought to induce him to remain in office, Danton taking part openly against him and making use of the opportunity to hold the minister up to ridicule.

"No one does more justice to Roland than I," he said, "but I tell you that, inviting him to remain, you extend the invitation to Madame Roland, for all the world is aware that Roland did not fill his department single-handed. I was alone in mine."

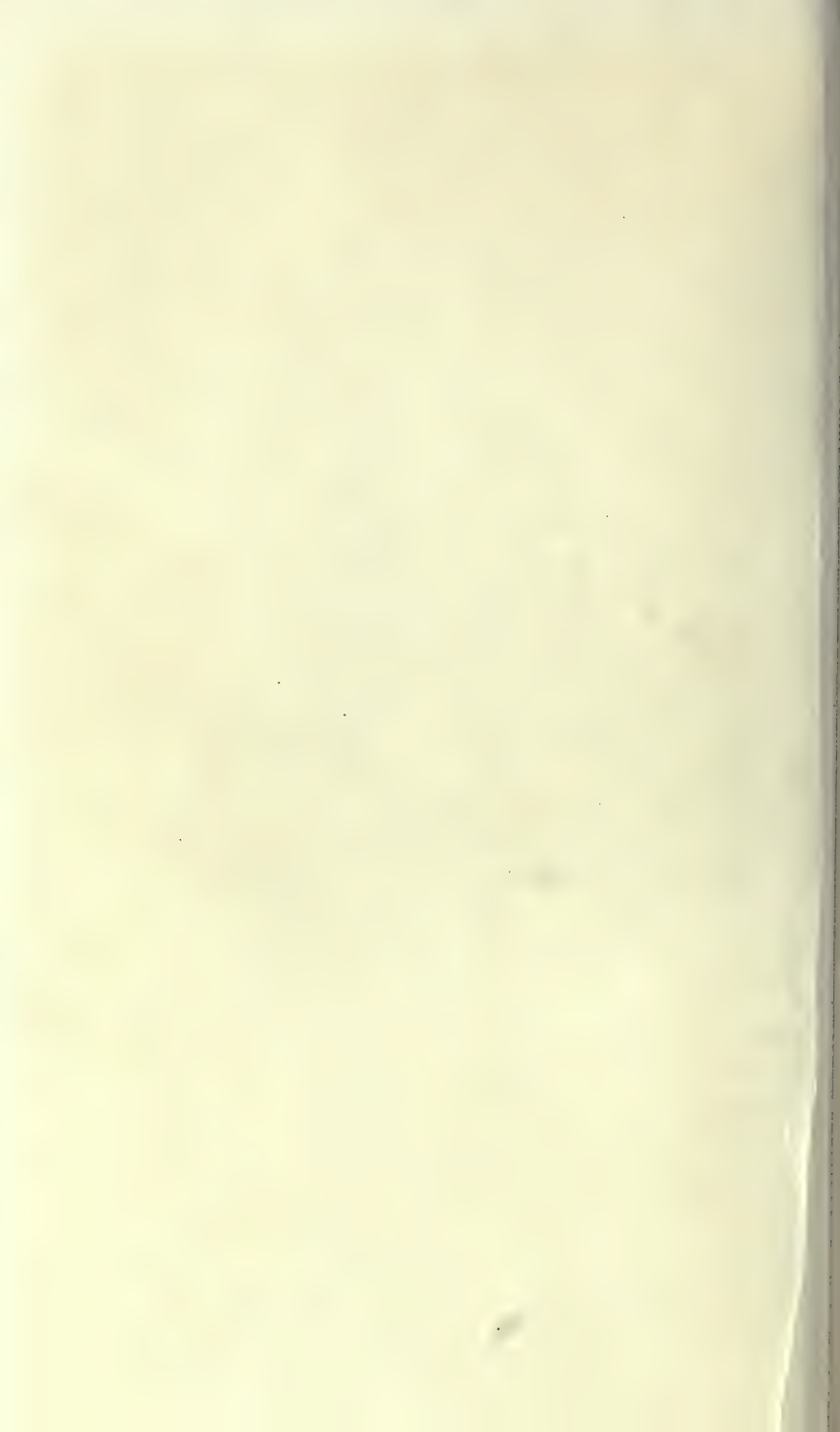
In the end it was discovered that the election had been legally invalid, and Roland retained his office, a sharpened edge added to the animosity between him and Danton. He had at once obtained the services



DANTON.

From an engraving by Greatbatch.





of trustworthy subordinates. A decree of August 11 enabled each minister to effect what changes in the *personnel* of the office he should consider necessary, and Roland had taken advantage of it to replace the men attached to the old régime, whom he had before been unable to dislodge, by ones he could trust to co-operate with him. Amongst these were Champagneux and Lanthenas—the latter of whom, no less than Pache, was to repay his confidence ill. And thus the minister set to work. Poor Roland! He could disembarass himself of faithless or incompetent officials, he could put officials upon whom he believed himself able to depend in their place, he could labour early and late; but one thing was beyond his power. He could not transform himself into the man needed to stem or control the onrushing tide.

Whilst this was the state of affairs, whilst the most ardent advocates of republicanism were still oppressed by the shame and horror of the deeds done in its name, and serious politicians were saddened by the defacement of their handiwork, it is curious to see the rose-coloured view taken of the condition of the city by a foreigner. Lord Edward FitzGerald, writing to his mother, described the spirit prevailing in all classes with enthusiasm. The joy of the French in their successes was, in his opinion, untainted by arrogance; their achievements were attributed alone to the greatness of their cause and the principles they were fighting for; the brotherhood of man was becoming a reality. "Nous sommes tous frères," they would tell a stranger, "tous hommes; nos victoires sont pour vous, pour tout le monde." All the good French sentiments had come out; all the bad, it seemed, had disappeared. And Lord Edward, thinking of his own unhappy country, looked on at a reconstituted France with envy and admiration. Older men, less blinded by the glamour clinging to the vindication of principles of right and

justice, took a different and less hopeful view. David Williams, a prominent London Unitarian, who was one of the eminent foreigners upon whom French citizenship had been conferred and who frequented Madame Roland's house, expressed the doubt, born of attendance at the debates of the Convention, as to whether the men of whom it was composed would devise a reasonable constitution. "I believe," his hostess added, speaking of this "wise thinker and true friend of mankind"—"I believe the knowledge he acquired of what we had already become increased his attachment to his own country. . . . 'How can men who do not know how to listen carry on a discussion?' he would say. 'You French do not take the trouble to preserve the outward decency which exercises so much power over assemblies. Folly, *insouciance*, and coarseness do not render a legislature acceptable. Nothing that strikes the public and goes on daily is unimportant.'"

Madame Roland had resumed her old habits. As before, she received no women, but twice a week she entertained ministers, deputies, or chance guests at dinner, the number never exceeding twenty and being more frequently fifteen. Dinner began at five, by nine o'clock all the guests had departed; and in the face of the capital her enemies afterwards strove to make out of these gatherings, "when, a new Circé, I corrupted all who had the misfortune to sit at my table," she is careful to lay stress upon the absence of profusion or luxury.

Of many of the men who went to her house, some of them well known, others almost forgotten, she gives sketches. Of one she has at this time nothing to say; but it was he round whom, for the short time she had to live, her thoughts were to centre. Buzot had been sent by Evreux to the Convention, and was in Paris.

It was a moment in her life favourable to the invading force of a fresh passion. She stood in a sense in the



midst of a world of overthrown idols. The Revolution had disappointed her ; Eudora had disappointed her ; above all, a life shared with Roland had disappointed her. In these days of storm and stress, of the pressure brought by sordid animosities and oppressive labour, even the modified content due to the consciousness of the happiness she bestowed must have been impaired. Ill and harassed, Roland, in spite of his love, will have been a dispiriting companion, and leisure for the inter-communication of ordinary domestic life must have been scanty.

And Manon, from of old, demanded an absorbing and dominating interest. Sophie Cannel had supplied it in her girlhood ; she was still the same woman who had idealised La Blancherie, had fallen in love with Roland, austere and staid, had indulged in sentimental friendships with Bancal and others. Had the Revolution proved all she had dreamed, it might possibly have satisfied her craving for a supreme object of worship ; that idol of her maturity thrown down its shrine was empty—till Buzot came to fill it. What he seemed to her has been already seen.<sup>1</sup> What he believed himself to be his memoirs tell. No romantic adventures were to be there recorded—thus runs his warning to the reader ; his tale was to be one of pure morals, severe integrity, some good actions mingled with involuntary errors, and—more often—the weaknesses a man cherished, though not without self-reproach. A deep respect for the dignity of man, his rights and his duties ; a genuine, constant, and immutable love of order, justice, and of the liberty which, equal for all, is as far removed from licence as virtue from crime,—this was the picture he meant to paint. “ If certain passions mingle in it, they are those that do honour to humanity, as great and as simple as Nature, which often makes use of them to develop and perfect

<sup>1</sup> Page 136.

her finest works. Happy the sage who never experienced them. Happier he who has been made the better by them."

Such, in his own estimation, was the man whom Madame Roland loved. The description itself, the conscious superiority characteristic of the time, the careful self-portraiture and the complacency of its half-confessions, complete the picture of the young Girondist to whom her last thoughts were given, and who returned in full measure her love. In reading it, it is fair to remember that self-advertisement was so much the custom of the day that a man who omitted to proclaim his integrity might almost be said to have failed in his duty to himself. For a statesman to have been silent on the subject of his virtues might have seemed a slur upon his party.

Buzot himself declared that he regretted his election. "I was happy, tranquil, honoured at home; and I was to abandon all this for the Convention, in which Marat and Danton would sit with me. . . . A presentiment I could not combat . . . warned me of fresh dangers I should incur, and misfortunes which would be drawn down upon me by my inflexible uprightness. But could I refuse this new sacrifice to my country?"

In Paris he had taken at once the position he held as one of the leaders of the Girondist party, and there can be no doubt that intercourse between him and the woman who was the soul of that party was quickly renewed. How rapidly their friendship developed into the passion it became is uncertain. It is significant that, in spite of the terms of affection upon which his wife and Madame Roland had parted, they appear scarcely to have met after the return of the Buzots to Paris.

They were best apart. In spite of his love for Madame Roland, Buzot retained a sincere regard for the plain, deformed wife who was also his kinswoman so that, a fugitive, with death staring him in the face

his thoughts were anxiously occupied with her and with her future. Yet during these autumn weeks a passion calculated to prove fatal to her domestic happiness as well as to that of Roland's remaining months was steadily gaining strength. To the outer world the friendship between the two members of the Girondist party seemed no greater than that uniting Madame Roland to others of similar opinions and interests. It was a time when accusations dealing with private morals were freely made, and her name had been in turn coupled with most of the men with whom she was on cordial or intimate terms. But to one of her daily associates the difference was clear. Lanthenas knew that to Buzot she had given what no other man had obtained, and he bitterly resented the fact. In her memoirs Madame Roland, with no mention of Buzot's name, has left a notice of her rupture with the comrade of many years, of his repudiation of Girondist principles, and of the causes to which she attributed his alienation. "I liked him ; I treated him as a brother ; I gave him the name of a brother. . . . He would have liked to live with us, and Roland would have consented. I opposed it, considering that so complete a sacrifice in a man of his age and with the affection he displayed presupposed the secret anticipation of a response that my principles forbade, and which he would besides have failed to elicit from me. . . . Apparently content, after the common fashion, with what he had, so long as others obtained no more, he became jealous and unhappy on perceiving that I did not remain indifferent. Nothing makes a man so sullen and unjust ; I felt it, and was too proud to spare him. He went away enraged, imagining the worst. Even his opinions took on a different colour . . . he could no longer share my views, much less those of him he saw I loved."

Such is Madame Roland's account of the breach ; and though M. Perroud, the latest editor of her memoirs,



surmises that other reasons contributed to separate Lanthenas from the Girondists, it was probably true that personal embitterment had much to do with his change of front. A series of communications from Madame Roland, undated, but belonging to this period, reflect the attitude he had taken up and supply a commentary upon her summary of the episode.

The first intimation of trouble is contained in a note written in October. It was followed by another and a more explicit one. "I am pursued by the thought of your situation," Madame Roland told Lanthenas; "and I see little good faith in your supposition that I can enjoy the pain I cause: it is the single misfortune to which I am vulnerable, and which has caused me grief. . . . Come and see me. You well know that I should not be at peace were my brother unhappy."

In a later letter the case is made plainer. "You distress me," she wrote, "for I hate to give pain; you have my esteem, my attachment, and I dread and grieve more specially to cause suffering to you. But were you a thousand times right, the domination I have acknowledged is established, and I cannot withdraw from it. It is not true that you wish me to feel hatred or despair. The first is impossible; the other would make you die of regret; and, besides, the ruling object alone has a right to produce it. You who invoke reason and protest against the caprices of the heart, be generous enough to be my friend. If you make this effort, many ills will be averted; but no ill can change my destiny save by cutting it short."

Lanthenas was not moved by the appeal from the position he had assumed, and a subsequent letter shows that Madame Roland, losing patience, had realised the fact that too high a price may be paid for a friend. Writing on the same day that an interview had taken place, and admitting that in the course of it she had changed

her tone, she declined to allow that he had cause for complaint. "I gave you esteem, affection, trust. If you withdrew because I bestowed these sentiments in a direction displeasing to you, you were certainly within your rights. You have, however, no right to blame me. When your blindness leads you to manifest your dissatisfaction to others, you fail in respect to the trust I felt in you, you fail in delicacy, you fail in courtesy. I no longer see in you anything but the vulgarity of a soul which is the prey of sentiments I do not characterise but despise."

It might be supposed that this frank denunciation would have put an end to the connection; but other letters followed, showing Madame Roland still anxious to be at peace with her old comrade, still touched by his suffering from the estrangement, and ready to receive him again on condition of amendment. Forgiveness, gentleness, and pity were wasted, and a business note of January 20, couched in purely formal terms, is proof that the friendship was at an end.

In order to trace to its conclusion a connection lasting over many years, the chronological order of events has been overstepped. Much had taken place before the final parting of Lanthenas and the Rolands.

## CHAPTER XXI

Pache at the War Office—Law against the emigrants—Lavater's protest—Dumouriez in favour of conciliation—His views of the Rolands—Fierce enmity of parties—Danton predominant—Madame Roland and Buzot—Apprehensions.

**I**F Lanthenas was the friend whose defection was the most painful to the Rolands, he was not the only man to whom they had given their confidence to find it betrayed. Amongst these Pache, now promoted to be Minister of War, was one of the foremost.

He was endowed with a special faculty for inspiring confidence. Owing his introduction into public life to Roland, his services had been relinquished by his first patron in favour of Servan, when the latter, placed at the head of the War Office, begged to be permitted to avail himself of the co-operation of so honest a man. "You no longer need him," he pleaded to Roland, "whilst I, with a superabundance of business, have no one I can trust."

Roland's high estimate of this honest man was shown when he pointed him out as a fit person to succeed to his own office should he resign it in order to sit in the Convention ; and his opinion was shared to the full by his wife. To Madame Roland it fell to write the letter to the Convention conveying her husband's views on the subject, and as she read her panegyric aloud Roland kissed her with tears of emotion. At the very time of Pache's appointment to the War Office no suspicion of any lack of good faith on his part had



occurred to the minds of either husband or wife, the three taking counsel together with regard to the policy to be pursued. Unity of action and opinion in the Cabinet was believed to be secured. The Rolands were quickly undeceived.

"Pache," adds Madame Roland in her account of the interview, "received the overflowings of our confidence in the silence of a man who assumes a mask. He opposed all Roland's views at the Council Board, and came to see us no more."

The reason was soon apparent. It became known that Roland's protégé and subordinate was transformed into the boon companion of Fabre d'Eglantine, Chabot, and their friends. His business capacities proved to have been, no less than his character, over-estimated; and the War Office was quickly in deplorable disorder.

The fact that the infant republic was fighting for its life, with Europe as its antagonist, that the emigrant nobles were waiting their opportunity, and that their readmission to the privileges of citizenship would have meant the establishment of a domestic propaganda of revolt, is the sole palliation of the law introduced by Buzot pronouncing sentence of death upon those of their number who should return to their native land. Although he afterwards attempted to dissociate himself from the use to which the decree was put, it is surprising that a man of calm temperament and high principles should have brought himself to this point of intolerance; and notwithstanding all that can be urged in his defence, it is natural that the enactment should have roused widespread indignation. In a letter addressed to Roland, as the member of the Government to whom he was personally known, Lavater entered an impassioned protest against it.

"I kneel to you in the name of humanity," he wrote from Zurich, "for the first time in my life. I

conjure you to do the possible, and the impossible, to abolish the unheard-of, barbarous, and sanguinary law of banishment against so many emigrants and of murder against all who return. How many innocent ! how many faithful to their duty ! I only add my name, Jean Gaspard Lavater. My good wife begs me, in God's name, not to send these lines to M. de Roland. I reply, 'You have forgotten that man's wise, upright countenance, and the good, true countenance of his wife, if you fear that any harm will ensue from these simple and humane words.' "

It was Madame Roland who replied to the remonstrance. Acquainted with the writer during a visit to Switzerland in 1787, she has left a tribute to his brilliant imagination, his affectionate heart, and the purity of his life. She now told him that, in the midst of political agitations, the remembrance of friendship came as a rest to the mind and a consolation to the heart. But on the subject of his letter she gave him little satisfaction. In the first place, he was mistaken in believing that Roland, bound to see that the laws were executed, had any hand in making them ; and secondly, if the decree against emigrants was severe, only persons acquainted with their schemes, their plans, and the excesses of those who had taken up arms against France could understand the necessity and justice of it. An attempt to moderate its provisions had failed ; and such modifications, certain to be effected in time, must perhaps be left to a period of greater tranquillity. Turning from public affairs she reverted to the change in her position and her husband's since the days when she had met Lavater—a change, she said, leaving them indifferent to life and to death, using the one according to their conscience and awaiting the repose offered by the other.

Lavater was unconvinced, and in a second letter he urged that, should Roland fail to obtain the necessary alterations in the obnoxious decree, he should resign hi

office. The answer he received, again from the minister's wife, was sent at a moment affording little leisure for argument. Excusing herself for delay, she proceeded to sketch, in a few graphic touches, the situation : "Ever in the storm, ever under the popular axe, we pursue our way by the illumination of lightning flashes, and were it not for the peace of conscience, stronger than all, life would become a weariness. With a little strength of soul, however, one grows accustomed to ideas hard to bear, and courage grows into a habit."

Courage had indeed been necessary during the past weeks, and it must have been becoming plain that the forces arrayed against the Gironde were gaining in strength. Dumouriez, paying a brief visit to Paris in October, has left upon record his estimate of the position of the conflicting parties. In co-operation with Danton alone he saw hope of saving the King and the country. In spite of ugliness, violence, ignorance, and coarseness, he recognised the intelligence and energy of the popular leader. Danton, too, was the one man—a special merit in the eyes of the soldier—who had not lost courage in the face of the invader. Had the Gironde effected a coalition with him, Marat and his faction might have been subjugated. Pushed, on the contrary, to the end of his patience, he sacrificed all to vengeance.

There was little hope that the course of conciliation recommended by Dumouriez would be pursued. The Gironde, stiff-necked and obstinate, entrenched behind the bulwarks of its conscious integrity, was in no way inclined for the compromise suggested by the man of the world ; and with irritation he saw that the opportunity would be lost. Applying the words of Plutarch to the men who rejected his advice, he observed that, introducing itself in this guise, temper not seldom ruled in the extravagance of virtue ; and he may have been in a measure right. In Madame Roland it can scarcely be



doubted that not uprightness alone would have made it hard for her to co-operate with Danton, and that, though she may have been unconscious of it, private prejudice closed the door. Dumouriez, recognising in her the centre of the Gironde, considered it her husband's misfortune that he was guided by his wife. If none had played a nobler, more interesting part than she, her ability was combined with imprudence, and the fact that she was known to govern Roland damaged him more than her counsels aided him.

He may have been right. If the General was guilty of exaggeration in asserting that deputies and ministers went daily to receive their orders from her, it was undeniable that at the Friday dinners of the Cabinet she was the only woman present at the discussion of the events of the week and the arrangement of fresh plans. Could she have concealed her supremacy, it would have been well. But, much to expect from any one, Madame Roland was not capable of the self-abnegation such concealment implies.

Through the autumn months the struggle between the Gironde and the Mountain was increasing in bitterness daily. No invective was too violent to be applied to an antagonist; never was abuse more coarse and violent. "The soul of this clique," wrote Marat of the Gironde, "is the pedant Buzot, the formalist Lacroix, the irascible Guadet, the perfidious Brissot, the double-dealing Gensonné, the Tartuffe Rabaut. Corrupt and corrupting, this hypocritical and barbarous clique . . ." What Buzot thought, if he did not say, of Robespierre may be read in his memoirs. A coward, deliberately cruel, full of hatred, a hypocritical scoundrel, forgiving neither the outrages he had committed, the benefits he had received, nor the talents he did not possess—such is a portion of the description of the leader of the Mountain to be found there.

The view taken of what was going on by an independent witness, dissociated from any of the men engaged in the struggle and regarding it with the interest of a foreigner, is worth quoting. Gouverneur Morris, American Ambassador, awaiting at Paris orders from home, looked on, calm and clear-sighted, at the strife of parties ; at the people, "or rather the populace, a thing which, thank God, is unknown in America" ; and at the King's precarious condition. Would it be taken for granted that he was guilty of all possible crimes, and particularly of the enormous one of not suffering his throat to be cut ? Morris described the two factions contending for predominance—one consisting of some half-dozen men, the other of fifteen or twenty—each claiming the merit of having begotten the young Republic, the people being as fond of the child as if it were their own. As to the chief actors, details were unnecessary since they must soon give place to others. Thus the American summed up the situation at this stage.

On October 29 Roland's report, as Minister of the Interior, of the condition of Paris was presented to the Convention ; containing a melancholy confession of failure on the part of the Government. "Administrative bodies destitute of power ; a despotic Commune ; a people good, but deceived ; excellent, but ill-commanded public forces : such is Paris. Weakness on the part of the legislative body which preceded you ; delay on the part of the Convention in making firm and necessary arrangements—such are the causes of the evils."

A fierce debate upon the report and the steps to be taken with regard to it ensued. Resulting in the first place in Buzot's victory, it was followed a week later by the first triumph of Robespierre over the Gironde in the Convention—a presage of what was to come.

The history of those autumn weeks is the history of increasing animosities, of a struggle which was to be

one of life and death. Calumnies and slanders were printed and circulated. No charge was too wild to find believers. The dinners where the Girondists met, at the Hôtel of the Interior and elsewhere, were represented by the organs of the Mountain as banquets and orgies where the capital was denounced and federalism—fast growing into a bugbear—was preached. Paris, feverish and disturbed, swayed hither and thither by the impulses or emotions of the moment, dominated by the men whose influence chanced to be paramount, was not to be counted upon. The Gironde knew it, conscious too that, in spite of their majority in the Convention, they were in a sense at its mercy. Danton's "ugly strength" was more and more obtaining for him the mastery over weaker men. Servan, making way for Pache at the War Office, confessed that he had himself "poisoned the army" with Danton's agents, urging in excuse that, as they were simple supernumeraries, a bolder successor might purge it of them. "What can you refuse a man who has a hundred rascals behind him to murder you?" he asked piteously, in reply to Madame Roland's upbraiding. Monge, at the office of the Marine, allowed himself to be coerced into sending a nominee of Danton's to inspect a portion of the force provided with its own inspectors. "Danton wants it done," he answered Roland, who raised objections. "Were I to refuse, he would denounce me to the Commune and the Cordeliers, and would have me hung." It was manifest that it was not by these men that a successful resistance could be opposed to the force of the popular demagogue. Roland stood stiffly upright. But how long would he be able to maintain the attitude?

And Madame Roland? Keenly, deeply, as she was interested in public affairs, inextricably as they were woven into the tissue of her private life, there were other things at the moment possibly of more importance.



Her romance was unfolding itself day by day. To these weeks and months belonged the strengthening of the bond uniting her to Buzot. "This Buzot," says M. Aulard, "was a refined and passionate dreamer, whose will—a little uncertain and oscillating—was dominated by Madame Roland and the ascendancy of her strenuous nature. She set this contemplative on fire, carried him to extremes, rendered this subtle spirit violent, inspired him with a policy and an eloquence made up of indignation, resentment, scorn, and heroism. . . . He was, in the Convention, the mouthpiece of Madame Roland." Under the same roof with her—for he retained the lodging he had occupied when called by Roland to fill an official post—was Lanthenas, jealous, unhappy, estranged. And finally there was Roland, leaning upon the stronger nature of his wife for help and support in the almost intolerable position in which he was placed, harassed at all points, worn out, oppressed by the sense of failure, powerless to cope with the forces arrayed against him. Such were the *dramatis personæ* of the private and domestic drama developing side by side with the public one patent to all eyes. Which of the two was of most importance to Madame Roland remains a question each will answer in his own way.

The chief business occupying the Convention at this time was the trial of the King. Through November and December the proceedings connected with it dragged on, arousing, strange to say, a lesser degree of interest and excitement than other questions. On December 4 Buzot took up a prominent position, and if, as M. Aulard asserts, he is to be regarded as Madame Roland's spokesman in the Convention, she cannot be held guiltless of a share in his action of that day, when he moved a decree, shameful in itself, and leading in no indirect fashion to the Terror.

"It is asserted," he said, rising, "that there are partisans

of royalty here. . . . I demand a decree that whosoever shall propose the re-establishment of royalty in France, or shall attempt it, shall be punished by death."

The motion was carried amidst acclamation, with the added proviso, also emanating from Buzot, that the capital penalty was likewise to apply to the endeavour to replace the sovereignty of the people by any other power whatever.

"That day," says Buzot's biographer,<sup>1</sup> "must have left an unending remorse in the mind of the deputy of Eure"; and a passage in Buzot's memoirs corroborates the statement, whilst it strives to extenuate his responsibility. "It was I," he wrote, "who proposed that law of which the cruellest use has been made. . . . What was termed the principle was first decreed. When it became a question of modifying it, it was no longer possible to obtain a hearing." Buzot was not the first, nor the last, man to set in motion forces of which he lost the direction and control. If he sinned, he expiated his guilt.

Whether or not Madame Roland shared his remorse there is no evidence to show. Already the distrust she inspired in the members of the Mountain was taking shape in definite accusations; and three days after Buzot's decree had been passed a scene took place in the Convention, indicating the excited and suspicious condition of public feeling. On December 7 Chabot, on the authority of an adventurer called Viard, who purported to have turned informer, charged the Girondists, and more especially the wife of the Minister of the Interior, with being in communication with Narbonne and other *émigrés* in London, with the object of saving the King's life, and intimidating the Convention by bringing a force of ten thousand men of moderate opinions to Paris. In this last charge the chronic jealousy of the departments found vent. Roland was called to the Bar of the Convention to be con-

<sup>1</sup> M. Hérissay.

fronted with Viard. At his suggestion the invitation was extended to his wife ; when the absurdity of the accusations brought against her was fully demonstrated, and she succeeded in covering Viard, to use her own phrase, with confusion. Her refutation of his charges was received with acclamation, and she was accorded "the honours of the sitting."

Yet, amidst her triumph, the silence of the galleries, refusing to echo the applause of the deputies, must have struck cold.

"See how silent the people are," said Marat. "They are wiser than we." *L'Ami du Peuple* took care, in the public papers, to inflame his readers against "le clique Roland," the hypocrisy, astuteness, and roguery of their plots against liberty. And still the trial of the King went on.

On December 26 the case for the defence was to be opened, and it was thought not unlikely that it would prove the signal for a popular rising. In view of the turbulent condition of the city and the danger of nocturnal disturbance, the usual midnight Masses had been prohibited on Christmas Day, and that evening Madame Roland wrote letters of farewell, as one who felt herself not improbably in the vestibule of death.

"I know not what may happen to-morrow," she told Servan ; "it is possible that many people may not see the end of the day. Projects are on foot against Louis, that the opportunity may be seized of including deputies and the Minister of the Interior in the massacre. I have sent my daughter to the country, have arranged my little affairs as if for the long journey, and await the event firmly. Our social institutions render life so laborious for good people that it would be no great loss ; and I have become so familiar with the thought of death that I shall go forth to meet the murderers, should they come ; persuaded also that, if there is one thing in



the world that can turn them from their purpose, it is the calm of courage and contempt for their blows." Describing the hatred of which she was the object, and again ascribing it to Danton as its fountain-head, she sent Servan her portrait, feeling that it might be her last gift. Save her husband, Eudora, "and one other person," no one else had seen it. With some sentences of deep discouragement, she closes the long letter. "In truth I weary of this world. It is not made for the good—there is some sense in turning them out of it. Adieu."

A second letter of the same date, addressed to her brother-in-law the Canon, commends more particularly her child to his care, should evil befall her parents, and takes thought besides for Eudora's governess, Mademoiselle Mignot, who completely enjoyed her misplaced confidence, and for whose old age she begged the Canon to care. "I leave my daughter," she added, "a good example, a cherished memory; her father adds some fame. In yourself and Mademoiselle Mignot she will possess wise guides. She will have enough money for her happiness."

It had been the intention of husband and wife, as a document dated this same Christmas Day shows, to send the child, with her governess, away from Paris and the dangers to be incurred there. In the family domain Eudora was to await happier days and to follow the example set by parents who had lived reproachless lives and would know how to face death fearlessly. The plan was relinquished; Eudora remained for the present in Paris. December 26 passed without the apprehended riots; and so the year 1792 drew to an end.

## CHAPTER XXII

Execution of Louis XVI.—Hébert's abuse of Madame Roland—Her life considered in danger—Roland's resignation and its causes—Madame Roland and Buzot—The Rue de la Harpe—Failure, public and private—Dumouriez a traitor—Seizure of Roland's papers—Bancal's love-affair—Madame Roland decides to leave Paris.

[T is unnecessary to enter into the progress of the tragedy culminating in the execution of the King on January 21. In her memoirs Madame Roland is singularly silent on that subject. It may be that at the end her heart was softened towards the victims of circumstances and fate; it may be that the gross abuse of which she herself had become the object had roused in her a fellow-feeling for those against whom like charges had been made. Madame Grandchamp distinctly states that "le ministre et sa femme ne voulaient que la échéance." Buzot, on the other hand, voted for death, though with delay, and subject to an appeal to the people.

Meantime, every effort was being made by her enemies to stir up public feeling against Madame Roland. "We have destroyed royalty," wrote Hébert in his ribald paper, "and we permit a still more odious tyranny to take its place. The tender half of the virtuous Roland as France to-day in leading-strings, like the Pompadours and Du Barrys. Brissot is Grand Equerry to the new Queen, Louvet her Chamberlain, Buzot Chancellor, Fauchet her Chaplain, Barbaroux her Captain of the Guards, Vergniaud Master of the Ceremonies, Guadet

her Cupbearer, Lanthenas Usher." In the same place, he went on to say, that Antoinette had plotted a new St. Bartholomew, Madame Roland, at the hour of the bats, received all these *beaux esprits*.

If the fears entertained by her friends were not exaggerated, her unpopularity had become such, by means of the constant attacks holding her up to public reprobation, that her life, as well as Roland's, was in danger. "It seemed," wrote Champagneux, "as if each night would be her last." The murder of husband and wife being considered possible, it was urged that they should seek safety by sleeping elsewhere than at the Ministry. Three times during Roland's term of office they yielded to these representations; but it was contrary to his wife's wishes and to her sense of what was wise or right. "I considered that it would be difficult to go so far as to violate the dwelling of a public functionary, and that if wretches should attempt that crime, its consummation would not be useless; that, in any case, the minister ought to be at his post; since, if perpetrated there, his death would cry for vengeance and be instructive to the Republic, whilst it would be possible to reach him in his comings and goings with equal profit to those who planned the enterprise, less gain to the public, and less glory to the victim. I know," she added, "that this argument will seem absurd to him who sets his own life above all, but whoever counts life for anything in times of revolution will reckon as nothing virtue, honour, and his country."

In January she was firm in refusing to leave the Hôtel, sharing Roland's room in order that the same risk might be run by both, and sleeping with a pistol under her pillow, to protect herself by suicide should it prove necessary. On one occasion she had reluctantly consented to fly, but losing patience when she was assuming the disguise provided for her, she threw



on one side and reverted to her determination to meet the assassins, should they come, at home.

"I am ashamed," she said, "of the part they wish me to play. I will neither disguise myself nor leave the house. If they want to kill me, it shall be at home. I ought to set this example of firmness, and I will do so."

The time when she could be described as holding her court at the Tuileries was nearing its end. On January 22 Roland resigned his office. His resignation was unexpected, and the reasons for it remain in some degree obscure. Scarcely more than a week earlier, in the letter to Lavater quoted above, Madame Roland stated that her husband was pursuing his career and gave no indication of his intention of retiring. Yet the letter read by Vergniaud, as President, to the Convention on the 22nd had been drawn up in her handwriting, was doubtless her composition, and it appears clear that she concurred in his decision.

"He quitted the ministry," she afterwards wrote, "in spite of his resolutions to lay the storm there and to brave every danger, because the condition of the Council and its weakness, ever on the increase and singularly marked towards the middle of January, gave promise for the future of faults and follies alone, of which he would share the shame. He was even unable to have his opinions and the reasons for them recorded upon the register, when they were opposed to the decisions of the majority."

A note to Lanthenas from Madame Roland, contrasting strangely and sadly, in its cold formality, with the loving friendship of earlier days, shows that by January 20 the resignation had been definitely decided on.

"Would it be possible, monsieur," she wrote as to a common acquaintance, "for you to come and see me for a moment? M. R[oland] is about to publish his financial accounts; there are certain points upon which I must

speak to you. I wrote to you on the subject several days ago ; may I hope to receive an answer to-day ?" For Roland was anxious, eagerly anxious, that the details of his stewardship should be examined, and his integrity established beyond doubt.

The letter tendering his resignation was dignified and temperate. Asserting his innocence of the accusations brought against him, he stated in calm language the facts of the case. He had been misjudged ; his denunciation of evil-doers had been mistaken for passion ; the multiplicity of his duties had been mistaken for power, the esteem he had enjoyed for credit. By the performance of his duty he had become inconvenient to many, and calumny had been unloosed against him. "I braved all ; it was my duty. There are no mortifications, persecutions, or even dangers which should not be borne by him who devotes himself to doing good. His self-sacrifice can be limited only by his unprofitableness, should he cease to inspire confidence. On that moment he must be the judge, since he then becomes injurious. For me that moment has been reached. I am represented as being a party leader and, deceived in this respect, good men have shared this view in the Convention itself, where I appear to have become a cause of dissension. . . . Heaven is my witness ; posterity will judge ; and my own age will soon be convinced that the most perfect devotion and the noblest sentiments caused me twice to accept office in the same way that they now dictate my retirement."

The discussion of the letter in the Convention showed the Gironde still in a majority ; and, though not without protest, it was decreed that the document should be printed and sent to the departments. Yet in spite of the power retained by his party, the step taken by Roland was due to his conviction that he

stood, in a sense, alone and without adequate support. In a paper drawn up a month after his resignation, and subsequently discovered by Champagneux, he stated that his action had been misunderstood by the world. He had been believed to have been intimidated by the blood-thirsty men arrayed against him and by the dangers to which he was exposed by reason of his unpopularity. This interpretation of his action he emphatically repudiated. Had he found a single man amongst the Girondist majority in the Convention bold enough to mount the tribune and to demand for him justice, inquiry, punishment, or acquittal, he would have faced the tempest. The tacit reproach is endorsed by Dumouriez's assertion that the policy pursued by the Gironde in abandoning him had been a cowardly one. His conduct, added the General, had been so stupid as to compromise both himself and his party, and the Council rejoiced at his resignation like a class released from a pedagogue. It was probably true that, conscientious, high-minded, and scrupulously honest, his presence in the Cabinet had been an embarrassment to men of more elastic principles.

His determination to withdraw from a post difficult to fill with satisfaction either to himself or to those who had placed him in it does not stand in need of further explanation. It has nevertheless been suggested that yet another motive may have contributed to render him desirous of retiring from public life, and that domestic sorrow and disappointment had robbed him of the spirit and courage necessary to keep up the struggle with the forces arrayed against him. For disappointment and sorrow, whether or not it influenced his conduct in this respect, there was abundant cause. Though the precise date at which Roland became aware of the sentiments entertained by his wife for Buzot is uncertain, the fact that she had made them known to



him and the effect of his knowledge upon their relations is made clear by a passage in her memoirs which must be inserted at length.

"I honour, I cherish my husband," she wrote in her prison, "as an affectionate daughter adores a virtuous father, to whom she would sacrifice her lover himself. But I have found the man who might be that lover ; and, remaining faithful to my duties, my candour was incapable of concealing the sentiments I subordinated to them. My husband, excessively sensitive, both in the matter of affection and self-love, could not endure the idea of the least diminution of his supremacy ; his imagination was darkened by it. I was irritated by his jealousy ; happiness fled from us. He worshipped me ; I sacrificed myself to him, and we were unhappy. Were I free, I would follow him everywhere, to soften his grief and comfort his old age—a soul like mine does not leave its sacrifices incomplete. But Roland is embittered at the idea of a sacrifice, and the consciousness, once made his, that I am offering him one destroys his felicity. It gives him pain to accept it and he cannot do without it."

This was Madame Roland's account of the shipwreck which during the last year of their life overtook the domestic happiness of husband and wife. Many and various have been the sentences passed upon her line of conduct. To Sainte-Beuve it seemed questionable whether unfaithfulness, with silence, would not have been the better course. Daudet ascribed to her an ungenerous motive, and explained the revelation to Roland as the unconscious vengeance of a woman who remaining true to her marriage vows, desires that the man who stands in the way of her happiness should suffer with her. To those who have followed Madame Roland throughout her life and have become acquainted with the genuine kindness which was so marked a feature

of her character, this explanation will not commend itself. It could never have been her deliberate intention to cause pain to the man she honoured, pitied, and respected. It was more likely on the impulse of a moment—a moment, perhaps, of nervous exhaustion and strain—that she gave utterance to a truth which, once spoken, could never be retracted. Or it may be—the suggestion has been hazarded—that she had cherished the hope that, knowing the facts, Roland would voluntarily have released her from her obligations and left her at liberty to follow the dictates of her heart. Such a course, it can scarcely be doubted, she would in his place have pursued. By the marriage bond, apart from affection, she felt no more fettered than others of her day and generation who had effected their emancipation from the traditions and morals of the past. Had Roland's concurrence been forthcoming, she would not have refused her freedom. Acknowledging the justice of his claims, she sacrificed to them herself, the man she loved, and what she believed would have been the happiness of both. In spite of her boast, the sacrifice was incomplete. She allowed Roland to know that it was made. To have concealed the facts from the companion of her daily life would perhaps have required a courage and self-control of which few women would have been capable. To let the truth appear did much to render her loyalty, so far as Roland was concerned, worthless; and the thought of him, already broken in health and spirits, weighted with failure, harassed by public cares, and losing his principal support and comfort in life—the certainty of his wife's affection—is a painful one.

The complete confidence he had felt in her had been shown by his readiness to further her intimacies with the men who had been their common friends. To learn that she had submitted to the domination of an absorbing

passion, and that, whilst recognising his rights and refusing to infringe them, her faithfulness cost her an effort, must have come with the shock of an unexpected revelation. Yet Madame Roland tells the story—or so much of it as finds a place in her memoirs—with a touch of complacency. “The development both of all this,” she observes, “and of the use made of the preceding years would throw much light upon the knowledge of the human heart, and teach discerning persons important lessons.”

It is evident that a sincere conviction of their uprightness sustained her and Buzot throughout the disastrous sequel; and that neither—both genuinely attached to those to whom they were bound by the marriage tie—perceived anything blameworthy in their relations towards each other. Passage after passage shows it. “We cannot cease,” wrote Madame Roland to her lover from her prison, “to be reciprocally worthy of the sentiments we have inspired. This being the case, we cannot be unhappy.” In remaining with her husband she conceived that she had paid, to the uttermost farthing, all that was his right. Nor does conscience appear to have demanded anything further of her. Morality, in her eyes, was confined to external facts, and no slightest evidence is to be found that the burden of remorse was added to the suffering she had to bear.

This being the condition of their home, there can have been little, during their ultimate spring, to soften for husband and wife the sense of public disaster. To the modest apartment in the rue de la Harpe—likened by Madame Roland at an earlier date to the coffin prepared for the philosopher—they retired pending the winding-up of Roland’s business affairs and the examination of his official accounts. The period during which his wife was to participate in public life was over. It had lasted no more than a few months, and the mark



she has left upon the history of the time is the more singular owing to the briefness of its duration.

The transition from the Hôtel of the Interior, with its varied and complicated interests, its daily and hourly excitements, the anxieties and struggles, friendships and animosities, finding their centre there, to the quiet of the rue de la Harpe must have been sharp and sudden. It may be that even Madame Roland's restless and strenuous spirit had wearied of the prolonged agitation of the last months, and that comparative repose was not unwelcome—it does not, at all events, appear that she made any attempt to neutralise on her own behalf the effect of the step her husband had taken, or to retain her influence upon the course of public affairs. Of a certain influence, it was true, she could not divest herself—that assured to her by her ascendancy over men with whom ties of friendship and confidence had been formed. But her house was no longer a rallying-place for the party, and she says herself that she saw scarcely any one. Her history at this period was chiefly confined to what took place within, and on this point, contrary to her wont, she has left little record. Thus some four months were passed, reports daily reaching the rue de la Harpe of the attacks made upon Roland by Marat or at the Jacobins, and the ex-minister tasting to the full the bitterness of defeat.

At a distance from the scene of action comparative peace might have been enjoyed ; but Roland was bent, before leaving Paris, on obtaining the recognition of his services as a faithful steward. He had published, on his resignation, accounts of expenditure such as none of his colleagues had supplied. "The examination of them," wrote his wife, "and their sanction by a report was an act of justice he was to demand in vain ; since it would have been to acknowledge that the calumnies spread abroad against him were false, to admit the infamy

of his slanderers, and the weakness of the Convention which had not ventured to defend him."

It was a dreary time. Public sentiment was so strongly excited against husband and wife that arrest was feared, and occasionally it was thought well to leave the rue de la Harpe and seek some other refuge. A week or more was thus spent in a neighbouring village—perhaps Meudon, where Manon had been used to pass the happy holidays of her early youth. From thence Roland wrote a mournful note to Bosc, announcing his return to Paris. Fear of death, he said, would become worse than death itself; and he added the melancholy and significant statement that death was the least of his sorrows.

The words spell the story of that gloomy spring. Father, mother, child, were together as in the old days at Villefranche and Le Clos—days not long past in point of years, but divided from the present by a gulf so wide and deep as to make it difficult to realise that there had been a time when the peaceful domesticities of a life untouched by passion had sufficed for happiness. Under the changed circumstances the tranquillity, the stillness suddenly encompassing them must have had something deathly about it. Friends remained to them. Bosc Champagneux, and others were true to the old ties; but beyond that innermost circle the treatment suffered by Roland could not fail to make a difference in his relations with the members of his own party, and, to use M. Perroud's words, "*il semble bien qu'un vide se soit fait peu à peu autour d'eux.*"

In the absence of external distractions the facts of their two lives—lives which might be expected to last for years—stared husband and wife in the face; no wonder it would have been easy for either to forget that the woman who should have been the stay and comfort of the fallen man was the cause of his deepest, most poignant disappointment. At Le Clos it might have

been easier to ignore what could not be forgotten. For Roland his rival would not have been, as it were, constantly in sight ; the clamour of his enemies would have reached his ears deadened by distance. But still he lingered, unable to make up his mind to leave the capital with his reputation uncleared. He had ever been proud of his unblemished character, and to be charged with peculation of the public money entrusted to him was intolerable. Eight times he wrote to demand from the Convention a decree declaring the accusations brought against him groundless. His request was met by continual delays ; the report he solicited was not made ; nor was the explicit permission he asked at length to leave Paris accorded. He was defeated at all points.

There is nothing more diverse or more illustrative of character than the fashion in which men accept defeat. Some can never bring themselves to acknowledge it to be final, and keep up the fight with destiny till death comes to end it. Others, more submissive, find a certain consolation in immunity from the necessity of carrying on the struggle, so that it almost assumes the guise of a deliverance. Others, again, knowing that they are beaten, never forget that they have a quarrel with life. This last was Roland's case. He appealed alike from the men who condemned him and from the friends who shrank from taking up his defence to those who should come after, and courted, with plaintive persistency, the verdict of posterity. "History," he wrote, "will avenge us. It will avenge us, and myself in particular. Cowards and ruffians may kill my body—they will not kill my memory." It might be true. Yet a belief in a vindication to take effect only when the ears that should have heard it are filled with dust is a shadowy and insufficient substitute for contemporary approval.

Of other comfort little was forthcoming. The cause to which Roland's life had been dedicated was in his



eyes ruined ; and it was part of the tragedy of the idealists of the Revolution that they were incapable of looking beyond failure and of acknowledging, with a faith in ultimate success, that their sacrifice had not been made in vain. The picture upon which the eyes of Roland and men like him were fixed was not only the temporary obscuration of principles destined to emerge later on from the haze of blood and brutality darkening them and to constitute the charter of rights for generations unborn. It was more than this. In the general overthrow of belief in God, in divine justice, and in a ruling Providence, they could look on with no sure or certain hope to the final triumph of all that was good in the ideas to which their lives had been devoted, nor could they recognise the truth that " God bids us fight for blessings that come through our defeat and not through our victory." <sup>1</sup> To Roland, and to his wife, personal failure owed part of its bitterness to the fact that it represented in a measure the eclipse of principles, the destruction of standards of right itself, and of hope for the future.

During the spring the Girondists possessed a majority in the Convention, and were strongly represented in the Committee of Public Safety, created in March. Nor were attempts at conciliation between the warring factions wanting. Danton would have made peace. If he neither liked nor trusted the Gironde, less blinded by passion than others he had a statesman's perception of the necessity of union. The assertion that Madame Roland, from her place of retreat, worked against an accommodation is unsupported by any trace of evidence ; but the rent had gone too far to admit of its being mended. " They do not trust me," Danton told Meillan, when Meillan would have acted as peacemaker, and he was undoubtedly right. Confidence was rare in these days, and men held their judgment suspended with regard to their closest friends.

<sup>1</sup> George Tyrrell, *Oil and Wine*.

At the end of March Dumouriez's treachery stirred latent suspicion into a blaze. Each man saw in his private enemy an accomplice, and hastened to denounce him. In the Convention the Girondin Lasource went so far as to suggest the possibility of guilt on Danton's part. It was a bold stroke. "Les scélérats!" cried Danton as he started to his feet; then, turning to his own party, "You were right, and I was wrong," he told them. "No peace is possible with these men. Let it be war."

It was at this juncture that a fresh insult was offered to Roland, and his papers were seized on the charge of complicity in the General's treason. Though no proof of such complicity was even alleged to have been found, Camille Desmoulins did not fail to make capital out of certain of the documents placed in his hands. In his bold pamphlet, *L'Histoire des Brissotins*, he represented Pétion as observing to Danton that what had troubled Roland in this affair was the anticipation that papers might be brought to light revealing his domestic troubles, and that it would be seen how bitter had been the consciousness of his wife's infidelity. "These monuments of his grief have not been found," Desmoulins was forced to admit, proceeding nevertheless to advert to other discoveries and to insinuate that the Rolands had been warned in time to enable them to destroy incriminating documents.

It is a curious fact, which may be mentioned in this connection, that the attacks upon Madame Roland's reputation were from first to last either couched in vague and abstract terms, or connected her name with those of so many different men as to defeat their purpose. Buzot was rarely associated with her in the public mind. On the wider question of Roland's guilt, however much Desmoulins and other irresponsible agitators might pretend to believe that he had been a traitor, that he was selling

his country to the enemy, that he was false to the principles of a lifetime, no one who knew him believed it. "How can you fail to recognise Roland's good faith, integrity, and patriotism?" Buzot asked Robespierre in a private conversation about this time. "Would you venture to assert that [he] has sold himself to the foreign Powers? You must be acquainted with the inflexible austerity of his morals, his unshaken public spirit, his ardent love of liberty? You have not forgotten the services he rendered you, or that he was your most intimate friend under the Constituent Assembly?"

"No," was Robespierre's answer, "I do not accuse Roland of having sold himself to the foreigner. But I ceased to see him from the moment he adopted Brissot's views on the subject of war."

The question of innocence or guilt was not now the all-important one it would have been under other circumstances. His enemies might in their hearts be convinced of Roland's integrity, but the strife of factions had reached a point where the predominance of one was a danger to the other. The death-struggle between the Gironde and the Mountain was about to begin; the Terror was at hand.

If Roland's mind was divided at this time between the pressing desire to obtain his justification as an upright servant of the public and melancholy brooding over his private sorrows, there is little to show in what manner his wife spent that last spring of her life. Few papers belonging to it are extant, and in her memoirs the period is passed over briefly. Three letters to Bancal prove that her cares and preoccupations did not prevent her from participating as keenly as ever in what affected her friends. Bancal was engaged in a love-affair with an English girl, Helena Williams, with whom he had become acquainted in London and who was now in Paris. Though an enthusiastic republican, Miss Williams



claimed that it had been owing to her influence that Bancal had voted against the death-sentence upon Louis ; and he was doing his best to induce her to marry him. Madame Roland, to whom he had confided his wishes, encouraged him to hope for success.

"I know nothing of the human heart," she wrote, "or you are destined to become the husband of Made-moiselle ——, provided you behave well and that she remains here three months. Constancy and generosity are all-powerful with an upright and affectionate heart, free from other pledges." Advice as to the best manner of pressing his suit follows. "Excess of sentiment, its delirium, its transports, may strike, seduce, and carry away the imagination and the senses ; but a genuine passion draws from itself the power of self-control and of entire self-sacrifice. Its delicacy, its perseverance, are the sole and sure means of attaching to you for ever the woman you desire to obtain as the companion of a lifetime. I did not see you yesterday," she adds. "If you are happy, I forgive you for forgetting me ; but I shall be mortally angry if you have borne a sorrow alone that could have been shared by friendship."

The letter is an example of her never-failing sympathy. Bancal was not destined to succeed in his suit. At the end of March he was one of the deputies sent to arrest Dumouriez, was by him delivered over into the hands of the enemy, and was kept in captivity for a year and eight months. By the time he was in a position to renew his proposals, Miss Williams was either engaged or secretly married to a countryman, and Bancal was dismissed.

As the months wore away it became clear that the Girondists were gradually losing ground. The Terror was approaching nearer and nearer, and life and liberty were increasingly insecure. Madame Grandchamp, looking anxiously on, feared for the future of her friends. "Though I had ceased to see them," she wrote, "I could

not be indifferent to the fate of a man for whom I felt so much esteem and a woman I had tenderly loved." Foreseeing danger should they remain in Paris, she sounded certain members of the Convention on the subject, and received answers far from reassuring. "If Roland would go away," she was told, "nothing will be done to him. Should he persist in the attempt to compel us to sign [his accounts], it will be necessary to impose silence on him as well as upon his wife." It was against the latter, Madame Grandchamp observed, that feeling was strongest. "I passed on the admonition to them," she added, "but for special and private reasons, unknown to me at the time, it was disregarded."

It is easy to understand that Madame Roland would have found it difficult to quit Paris, and by so doing not only to cut herself off from Buzot, but to leave him in what was becoming manifest peril. She nevertheless decided finally upon this course, and—as it was to prove, too late—took the step of demanding passports, at the end of May, for herself and Eudora.

"My domestic affairs," she wrote afterwards, "my health, and many other good reasons, called me to the country; amongst others I calculated that Roland would find it easier, if alone, to escape the pursuit of his enemies should they proceed to extremities, than if the small family were together. It was wisdom to diminish the points at which he was vulnerable." To this explanation, supplied in the text of her memoirs, a footnote was added, as by an afterthought of sincerity. "This was not my strongest reason; for, weary of the course of events, I had no fears for myself. Guiltless and courageous, injustice might strike me—it could not dishonour me; to endure it was an ordeal I had a certain pleasure in defying. But another reason that I may perhaps some day divulge, and which is quite personal, decided me upon going."

When, seven years after her death, Champagneux published a second edition of her memoirs—the first, edited by Bosc, appeared in 1795—his commentary made the meaning of Madame Roland's words still more clear. He was, he said, acquainted with the motive in question; she had made it known to him. The moment was not, however, yet come to publish it. "The age is too corrupt to believe in the straining after virtue of which she gave proof."

The struggle of the past months had ended in the sacrifice of all that, for the moment, made life best worth living to her. She had resolved to return to the country, and there to take up again the round of the duties which had become so irksome. It is true that Death was to step in and to prevent her from carrying her purpose into effect. But it should never be forgotten that the determination had been arrived at. She was, whatever may have been her faults, a brave woman. It may well be that to face the life she saw before her required more courage than to face death. That courage she had shown.



## CHAPTER XXIII

May 31—The Insurrection—Attempt to arrest Roland—Madame Roland at the Tuileries—Fails to gain a hearing—A troubled night—She is arrested.

THE history of the insurrection of May 31 need not be written here, save in so far as it sealed the doom of the Rolands. Disorder and lawlessness arrayed against constituted authority represented largely by the Gironde, then achieved its triumph; the Convention, surrounded by an armed force, was helpless to resist insurgent Paris; anarchy prevailed.

That May had been singularly dry. Gouverneur Morris, the American, unrecalled, like his brother-diplomats, on the death of the King, had retired from the noise and tumult of the city to a "neat little house" on the banks of the Seine "with a pretty garden and some green trees," and thence wrote to describe his surroundings, "so scorched by a long drought that, in spite of all philosophic notions, we are beginning our processions to obtain the favour of the *bon Dieu*." Morris would have liked to tell those seeking in this manner to propitiate God that mercy was before sacrifice but reflected that, as a public man and a Protestant, it would not become him to interfere.

In the city from which the envoy had withdrawn stormy scenes were enacted every day. At times it almost seemed as if the Gironde might triumph; in the Convention the party was still powerful, and it was difficult to realise that the Convention might no

be able to stand against the domination of the mob. Yet the mob had penetrated into the Convention itself, and made a noisy accompaniment to the deliberations of the representatives of the people. It was useless to protest. When Buzot, indignant at the disorder invading the precincts, denounced the occupants of the galleries as frantic women, eager for murder and blood, and demanded that admission should be by ticket, Marat answered with a sneer. "C'est le plan de la femme Roland," he said.

Whether or not she had dictated the suggestion, her intention of leaving Paris implies a recognition of the condition of affairs. Had time been granted her, she would have been at a distance from the centre of danger. Passports had been obtained, not without difficulty, for herself and her child; it only remained to have them endorsed by the municipal authorities. A further delay, however, occurred. She had been ill and confined to her bed; and it was not until Friday the 31st that she could arrange to take the passports for the necessary signature. On that day the tocsin warned her that it was not well to go abroad. It would, moreover, have been impossible to escape from the city. The barriers were closed; all intercourse with the outer world, even by post, was interrupted. Paris had risen in revolt. "The sun was shining brilliantly on the crowded streets; the shops were shut as for a festival, and the women, seated on their doorsteps, were watching the insurrection go by."<sup>1</sup>

At the bar of the Convention deputations from the sections presented themselves in turn. One from the Commune declared open war upon the Girondists, denouncing them as foes of the country, Royalists proscribed by public opinion. At half-past five that afternoon an indication was given of what the insur-

rection might mean for individuals belonging to the unpopular party and for Roland and his wife in particular. At that hour six men, armed with an order emanating from the Revolutionary Committee, arrived at the rue de la Harpe to put the ex-minister under arrest.

Roland refused to yield obedience to an authority sanctioned by no law. "Should you use violence," he added, "I can oppose to it only the resistance of a man of my years. But I shall protest against it with my last breath."

It appeared that the party were not prepared to employ force, and their leader withdrew to make his report to those who had sent him, his comrades remaining behind to await his return. In a hurried consultation it was decided that Madame Roland should go at once to make known what had taken place to the Convention and either avert the arrest, or, if too late for this, ensure Roland's speedy liberation. It does not seem to have occurred to her that the Convention might be powerless to act in the matter.

In her account of what followed, clear in her memory as she wrote it in prison, the thrill of excitement makes itself felt. If any lassitude had checked her energy during the past months, it had vanished now that the crisis had come. Driving in a *fiacre* rapidly to the Tuileries, she found the courtyard full of armed men, through the midst of whom, her morning dress covered by a black shawl, and closely veiled, she succeeded in making her way, only to find the doors beyond shut and her progress barred by sentinels on guard who were deaf to her entreaties to be allowed to enter. Every moment was of importance, and with ready wit she adopted the language of some devotee of Robespierre. "What, citizens!" she cried, "in this day of salvation for the country and in the midst of the traitors



we have to fear, you are ignorant of the importance of the memorandums I have to hand on to the President. Send for an usher that I may entrust them to him."

The device succeeded. The doors were opened, and she was admitted to the outer, or petitioner's, hall, and bidden there to await an usher. A quarter of an hour passed, then Rôze entered—the same official who had been sent to summon her to the Bar of the Convention when, accused by Viard, she had put her enemies to shame. Then she had been invited to appear; now she came, a suppliant, to entreat a hearing. The contrast struck her with bitterness. Rôze, friendly and courteous, was ready to serve her in any way he could, taking the letter she had hastily prepared, with a promise to use his endeavours to ensure its being read.

An hour passed whilst the anxious woman paced restlessly up and down. From time to time, as the door into the hall where the debate was proceeding opened for a moment, a hope that she was to be summoned rose, only to die away as the door was again shut. Now and then a burst of angry voices penetrated to the listeners without. And still she waited, with what sentiments it is not difficult to imagine. At home was Roland—unless indeed his arrest had already been effected—his fate uncertain. Within the hall, separated from her only by a few feet, was Buzot, one of the chief objects of popular fury. Reports may have reached her of what was going forward on the other side of the door; and she may have known that at that very moment the deputation from the Commune was urging the arrest of the Girondist leaders.

When at length Rôze reappeared, it was to bring no tidings of success. Tumult indescribable reigned in the Convention; the deputation from the Commune were at the Bar. Some of the men it had denounced

were making their escape as best they could. No one could foresee the result of the day's proceedings.

One thing was clear—there was not a chance that Madame Roland's letter would be read. As a last resource she begged that some deputy—that Vergniaud—should be asked to come and speak to her. He obeyed the summons, listened to what she had to tell, and went back to the hall to see what it was possible to do. Returning, he could only announce that he had failed. Success, in the present condition of the Convention, was not to be hoped for. Were Madame Roland admitted, she might possibly, being a woman, prosper better; but the Assembly could do nothing—so he told her. Her impassioned reply shows how far she was from a comprehension of the true state of affairs.

“It could do all,” she cried vehemently; “the majority of Paris only asks to know how it ought to act. If I am admitted, I shall venture to say that to which you could not give expression without being impeached. I fear nothing in the world, and if I do not save Roland I shall have uttered forcible truths not useless to the Republic. Tell this to your colleagues. A courageous outburst may have a great effect, and will serve at least as a great example.”

“I was in truth,” she wrote afterwards, describing the scene, “in that condition which gives birth to eloquence, full of indignation, raised above fear, aflame for the country I saw ruined, all that I love in the world exposed to the greatest danger. Feeling strongly, expressing myself with facility, of too high a spirit not to do so with loftiness, I had the greatest interests of which to treat, certain powers to use in their defence, and I was in a position unique for enabling me to do it well.”

If the self-confidence of the passage is characteristic

of the writer, she was not impossibly right. Had the Convention retained its old authority, her appeal to it might have taken effect. Vergniaud pointed out that in any case there was no chance of her letter being read for an hour and a half, other business blocking the way, and she reluctantly consented, at least for the moment, to abandon her attempt to gain admittance, to go home and find out what was the state of affairs there; returning later to the Tuileries to endeavour to obtain a hearing.

At the rue de la Harpe she found Roland gone. The men sent to arrest him had been content to withdraw, carrying with them his written protest against the illegality of the whole proceeding, and he had then escaped by a back door from the house. Following him to the apartment of the friend—probably Bosc—with whom he had taken shelter, she doubtless gave him an account of the measures she had taken; after which she again set out through the streets, now emptied of the crowds filling them during the day, for the Convention, only to find that the sitting was over. Had the Assembly then made its submission? she asked herself with scorn. Was the revolutionary force so strong that, at a crisis such as this, the Convention could be dispensed with?

"Citizens," she inquired of some men who were standing beside a cannon, "has all gone off well?"

"Oh, wonderfully well," was the reply; "they embraced and sang the Marseillaise there, at the tree of liberty."

"Is the Right pacified?" she inquired.

"The Right had no choice but to yield to reason," some one answered. The Municipality would cause the Twenty-two to be arrested. Was not the Municipality the sovereign power, ready to punish traitors and uphold the right? The departments? The departments would



act in conjunction with Paris, and would approve what the capital did, as in the case of August 10. It was Paris which had saved them.

"It may well chance that Paris will be its own ruin," observed Madame Roland, concluding the vain altercation she had imprudently carried on, and turning to regain her *fiacre*. A dog had followed her closely, and the detailed account she gives of the attempts made by the driver to secure and carry it home to his little boy is a curious example of the manner in which, in moments of strain and tension, trivialities are stamped upon the brain. As, assisting the man's endeavours, she kept the little creature on her knee, the thoughts of the woman for whom life, home, all she loved, was at stake, wandered to the story of a man who, weary of his kind, had sought instead a forest solitude and the company of—more humane—beasts.

Time for reflection was short. On leaving the Tuileries, Madame Roland had first visited the lodging of a friend, from whom she hoped for aid in arranging Roland's escape. Having roused him—night was advancing—it was settled that he should come early next morning to the rue de la Harpe, and there learn where the fugitive had taken refuge. Proceeding on her way home, she was stopped by a soldier on guard, and interrogated as to her object—a woman and unescorted—in being abroad at that hour. It was imprudent, the man told her, not uncivilly. She agreed. Strong motives, however, had made it necessary.

"But, madame, alone?" he remonstrated.

"How alone, monsieur?" she replied. "Do you not see that innocence and truth are with me? What more is wanted?" and, convinced or not, he allowed her to pass.

When the rue de la Harpe was reached, a man awaited her in the doorway, begging to be admitted to Roland's presence.

"To his dwelling, yes," she replied, "if you have anything of use to communicate. It is impossible that you should see him himself."

"They are absolutely determined to arrest him to-night," was the rejoinder.

"They will be very clever if they do," she answered, receiving in return the congratulations of the visitor, who had come to deliver a warning.

It might be asked, she observed in telling the story of that troubled night, why she herself, hated by those in power, had not sought safety in flight. Some reasons she would give, others she reserved until another season. She ran less danger than Roland—of whose flight, now that he was out of office, she approved; to kill her would be to incur odium from which her enemies would shrink; her arrest would serve no purpose, and would be no great misfortune. Should she undergo examination, she would find no difficulty in defending herself, and might enlighten the public and clear Roland. If, on the other hand, the September massacres were to be repeated, all would be lost, the evildoers would have gained the mastery, and she would prefer death to witnessing the ruin of the country. It would be an honour to be included amongst the victims; her murder might be a sop to the enemy, and Roland, if he were saved, might be of service in some part of France.

"Either, then," she concluded, summing up the alternatives, "I risked no more than prison, with proceedings against me which I should turn to the use of my country and my husband; or, if I was to die, it would only be in an extremity rendering life odious to me."

There were, moreover, difficulties in the way of finding shelter elsewhere. She had associated with few people during the past months; of the friends with whom she

might have taken refuge some were out of Paris, others had sickness in their house ; and it would have been unwise to join Roland in his place of concealment. She also disliked the thought of leaving her servants to shift for themselves. All these reasons combined to determine her upon awaiting the event at home.

The fact that she was physically worn out may have inclined her to inaction. For several days she had been ill, and for hours had not had a moment's repose. Nor was she yet to be permitted to rest. She had scarcely kissed Eudora and taken up her pen to write to Roland when, at midnight, she was interrupted by the arrival of a deputation from the Commune come to demand him.

"Where can he be?" said the leader of the band, in answer to her assurance that he was not in the house. "When will he return? You must be acquainted with his habits and be able to judge."

"I am ignorant whether your orders authorise these questions," she answered. "I do know that nothing can compel me to reply to them. Roland left his house whilst I was at the Convention ; he was unable to make me his confidant ; and I have no more to say."

Having got rid of her guests—who retired leaving the house guarded—she ate some supper, and, overcome with weariness, went to bed. An hour had not passed when she was awakened from the profound slumber of exhaustion. Representatives of the section had come and were asking to see her.

"I understand the meaning of this," she answered ; "I will not keep them waiting" ; adding quietly to the maid, who showed surprise that she took the trouble to do more than put on a wrapper, "One must dress decently to go out."

Her interpretation of the untimely visit was quickly justified. She was to be arrested, by order of the



Revolutionary Committee, and seals were to be placed upon the property. A supplementary order of arrest from the Commune was produced, and taking counsel with herself she rapidly decided against a vain resistance. A crowd had collected, and were coming and going in the small apartment; the atmosphere was stifling, and the officers in charge powerless to exclude the irresponsible and curious witnesses of the transaction, as, seated at her writing-table, Madame Roland communicated what had taken place to a friend and commended Eudora to his care.

The letter was not destined to be sent. It was necessary first, the representative of the Commune declared, that he should read what had been written and should know to whom it was addressed. To the first demand Madame Roland replied by reading what she had written aloud. To name the person for whom it was intended was a different matter. It was not a moment to give the names of those she called her friends, she answered, as she tore the letter up, smiling as she perceived that the fragments were carefully preserved. It had borne no address.

Only at seven in the morning were the arrangements complete. Weeping, little Eudora and the servants took leave of her.

"You have people who love you," observed one of her captors.

"None others have ever lived with me," she replied, descending the stairs.

Only once more was she to revisit her home. That crowded, hurrying, agitated night was the last she was to know of freedom.

## CHAPTER XXIV

Madame Roland in prison—Her sense of relief—Letters to Buzot—Visits from Madame Grandchamp and others—Literary activity—Her *interrogatoire*—Roland and Buzot in safety.

THE blow had fallen. Madame Roland, though charged with no specific offence, was lodged in the prison of the Abbaye. If it may have seemed as yet almost impossible that any public body, though illegally constituted, should proceed to extremities against her, the condition of the city, the frantic mobs, and the massacres of September might well cause the future to wear an uncertain aspect. As she passed through the crowd collected round the carriage that was waiting to convey her to her destination, the cry “À la guillotine,” raised by some women, had a sinister sound; yet her spirit never failed, and she negatived the offer of her escort to let down the blinds. Innocence, she observed, did not assume the guise of guilt; she feared the eyes of no man; and when, on leaving her at the Abbaye, the men who had effected her capture remarked that Roland, by his flight, had given a proof of guilt, she entered with vehemence on his defence. Just as Aristides, severe as Cato—these were the virtues that had won him enemies. Upon her let them wreak their rage; she was prepared to brave it. It was for Roland to preserve himself for his country.

The objectless vindication of her husband's character—like the argument with the *sansculotte* the preceding evening—her eagerness to explain her position and Roland's

to all who would listen, partly explained by overstrain and excitement, is nevertheless very characteristic of a woman to whom expression, whether by word of mouth or on paper, was always a necessity.

The gaoler to whose custody she was consigned did all, in spite of injunctions of severity, that was possible to a kindly man to alleviate her position, and was seconded by his wife. Solitude was secured to her; and she was presently left alone to face the situation and to take her soundings. Her first sensations, it is singular to find, were the reverse of painful.

"I would not," she wrote, "exchange the moments that followed for what others would consider the sweetest of my life. I shall never forget them. They caused me to feel, in a critical condition, with the future before me stormy and uncertain, all the value of strength and uprightness in the sincerity of a good conscience and a great courage. . . . I recalled the past; I made my calculations as to the future; and if on examining my heart I found some over-powerful affection, I discovered none of a nature to cause me to blush, not one that did not serve to feed my courage or that it was unable to control. I dedicated myself voluntarily to my destiny, whatever it might be."

It was no empty boast. By her bearing during these last months of her life Madame Roland disarms criticism, and, so to speak, justifies an estimate of herself that might have seemed too high. Humility she had never affected. Self-confident, conscious to the full of her talents and gifts, proud of her public spirit, proud of the sacrifices she was ready to make—such she had ever been, such she remained. But her heroism in facing peril, the calm with which she was prepared to meet death, showed that she had not miscalculated her strength, and that hers was not the courage of the braggart that fails when brought to the test. Champagneux, who had



been well acquainted with her in her days of prosperity, felt that never till he saw her in her prison had he done her full justice. "I entered her cell," he afterwards wrote, "as one enters a temple."

To value aright the greatness of her courage, the completeness of the ruin that had overtaken her must be realised. To lookers-on it would have appeared that upon no single point could her thoughts rest with comfort or relief. Her home was desolate; the husband for whom, in spite of the cloud that had overcast their relations, she retained an affection made up of habit, respect, and compassion, was a fugitive, pursued by his enemies; her child was parted from her and left solitary and helpless; the man she loved most, as well as almost every friend she possessed, was in danger; lastly, the cause to which all had been sacrificed, gladly and freely, seemed lost, stained with blood, and betrayed. Yet it never appears that, save for a brief space, she lost heart; the weakness of despair was never hers.

Let her natural and inborn gallantry be what it might, the spirit in which she accepted her fate, almost with exultation, demands explanation. It may have been true that, to the political enthusiast, the shipwreck of the revolutionary vessel, the defacement of her ideals, the hopelessness of the situation, robbed life of much that gave it value. Something more was necessary to reconcile the woman to her doom. Nor is the clue to the mystery wanting. The true history of that time—the history of heart and soul—is to be sought, not so much in the comments of spectators or friends, or even in her memoirs, as in the letters she wrote to Buzot when a safe channel of communication was found. In passages from these letters the key to her attitude throughout her whole imprisonment—one of relief rather than resignation—is found, and they are therefore, though belonging to a somewhat later date, in their place here.

"You alone in the world," she wrote, "can understand that I was not very sorry to be arrested. It will render them less furious, less hot against Roland—so I told myself. Should they proceed against me, I shall know how to act in a manner useful to his reputation. It seemed to me that I should thus acquit myself of an indemnity due to his griefs. But do you not see that also, in my solitude, I am with you? In this way, through captivity, I sacrifice myself to my husband, I keep myself for my friend, and to my oppressors I owe the reconciliation of duty and love. Do not pity me. Others admire my courage, but they know not my causes of rejoicing." Again, ten days later: "What matter where I live, here or there? Do I not carry my heart everywhere, and to be shut up in a prison—is it not to be given over to it entirely? . . . If I must die—well, I have known all that is best in life, and its duration might involve fresh sacrifices. The moment when I was proudest of my existence, when I felt most vividly that exaltation of the soul which braves all dangers and rejoices in running risks, was when I entered the Bastille chosen for me by my foes. I will not say that I went out to meet them; but it is very true that I did not fly. . . . It was a delight to be of use to [Roland] in a manner that left me more yours. I should like to sacrifice my life for him in order to win the right to give my last sigh to you alone." Recurring to the same theme on July 7—when her captivity was more than five weeks old—her tone is unaltered, as she dwells upon "the charm of a prison," where no distasteful duties claimed thought or care, where there was none to suffer were she melancholy, none to attempt to elicit sentiments she had it not in her power to bestow; where she was at liberty to recapture moral independence. "It was not permitted to me to seek that independence and thus to disburden myself of the happiness of another

to which I found it so difficult to contribute. Circumstances have won for me what I could not have obtained for myself without a species of crime." In fetters she had found freedom, she was given back to herself and to truth.

It is by her relief, her joy, that it is possible to measure the misery of the bygone months, the strain of the struggle she had kept up, and to estimate at its legitimate worth the sacrifice, however imperfect, she had made to conscience and duty. In the cell at the Abbaye she had regained peace.

She had been there no more than a few hours when she received a visit from M. Grandpré. Appointed by Roland to inspect the prisons, he was eager to render any service in his power to his patron's wife, and at his suggestion she wrote to lay her case before the Convention, in a letter couched, as usual, in eloquent language and protesting against the wrongs suffered by Roland as well as by herself. "If my crime," she ended, "is to have shared the austerity of his principles, the energy of his courage, and his ardent love of liberty, I confess my guilt and await my chastisement."

There was little likelihood that her remonstrances would be listened to by the Convention. That day Louvet had declared to those of the Girondist party gathered together for consultation at Meillan's house that nothing could be done there, save to offer themselves as a prey ; that it was useless to remain in Paris, dominated by terror, and where the conspirators were masters of the armed force and the constituted authorities. Only the insurrection of the departments could save France. On June 2 those of the party who could escape had accordingly fled ; Buzot was amongst them.

One other letter, besides that she had addressed to the Convention, was written by Madame Roland on the first day of her imprisonment. It was to Bosc :



"To-day upon the throne, to-morrow in chains. Thus, my poor friend, is uprightness treated in time of revolution. You would not believe how much I have thought of you this morning. I am persuaded that you are one of those who will be most occupied with my vicissitudes. Here I am, *en bonne maison*, for as long as it may please God. Here, as elsewhere, I shall be on good enough terms with myself to suffer little from the change. No human power can deprive a sound and strong soul of that kind of harmony which keeps it above everything. I embrace you cordially. For life and death, esteem and friendship."

Bosc deserved her confidence. On that day of tumult he had hastened to the rue de la Harpe, had carried away little Eudora, and had placed her with one of his friends, a Madame Creuzé Latouche, who was to care for her with her own children. Eudora was safe, and concerning her, at least, her mother was at rest.

That night, worn out by the agitation of the preceding twenty-four hours, the prisoner slept, awakened from time to time by the noise around her, but falling again into deep slumber, from which even the tocsin scarcely roused her for more than a moment, though ignorant of what that ominous sound might portend.

"If they kill me," she told Grandpré when, at ten o'clock, he came to ask how she had passed the night, "it will be in this bed. I am so tired that I shall await everything here."

By midday, nevertheless, she had risen, and was setting in order her new abode—arranging a writing-table, and sending for the books she wished to study. Thomson's *Seasons* she had brought with her. Plutarch, Hume's *History of England*, and an English Dictionary were to constitute her library.

"They shall not prevent my living till the last moment," she said to herself, as, not without a certain

amusement, she made her preparations. . . . "Should they come, I go to meet them, leaving this life to enter into rest."

Service was at the disposal of prisoners who had the wherewithal to pay for it ; but she determined from the first to dispense with help in keeping her cell in order. By taking that office upon herself she ensured promptness and cleanliness, neither of them to be come by should others be depended upon. Though the small prison allowance for food and fire could be supplemented by private means, always indifferent in such matters, she determined to reduce her personal expenditure to the lowest point possible, partly in order to prove by experience what that point was. Before long her daily diet consisted of a breakfast of bread and water, a plate of meat and vegetables for dinner, and in the evening vegetables alone. On the other hand, she supplied the wants of some of her fellow-prisoners, and did not deprive the servants of the gratuities they might have gained by waiting upon her. "When one is or seems severely economical," she observed, "in order to be pardoned one must be generous to others."

In the meantime, to return to the beginning of her captivity, a blow greater than any personal danger had been dealt her in the news of the decree of arrest passed against the Girondist members. By this step the last touch had, in her eyes, been put to the ruin of the country. Almost every friend she possessed was numbered amongst the proscribed ; and she was, most of all, tortured by anxiety concerning Buzot's fate. In her bitterness of spirit she felt for the moment that death itself would be welcome.

She had not yet been subjected to the examination she was daily expecting. Visits were paid her by divers officials, with the ostensible purpose of inquiring whether she was satisfied with her treatment, or had reason for

complaint. Was her health suffering? was she a little *ennuyée*? she was asked; answering that she was well and by no means *ennuyée*. *Ennui*, she added, was the malady of vacant souls and resourceless minds; proceeding, as always, to denounce the illegality and injustice of her detention.

During her early days of captivity she received a visit of another nature. This was from Madame Grandchamp. Though the estrangement between them had apparently been complete, old affection had stirred within Sophie at the news of the arrest, and hesitating to intrude uninvited upon the prisoner, she sent a note placing herself at her disposal. "You cannot have forgotten what I was to you," she added, with an appeal to the past.

The answer was cordial. Accepting frankly her former friend's offer of service, Madame Roland wrote that, in proof of her confidence, she was choosing Madame Grandchamp as the depositary of a charge demanding boundless trust. What that charge was, Madame Grandchamp learnt when she hastened to the Abbaye. Owing to a connection between her and Grandpré, she found no difficulty in obtaining admission to Madame Roland's cell; and her description of what followed places the two women graphically before us.

Excitable and emotional, Madame Grandchamp was so much moved by the thought of the circumstances under which they were to meet that she came near to swooning as the bolts were withdrawn; and without venturing to look the prisoner in the face, threw herself tearfully into her arms. Madame Roland was less agitated. Taking courage from the unfaltering tones of her voice, the guest raised her eyes, and was *interdite* at perceiving that those of Madame Roland were lit with something like gladness, her deepened colour alone testifying to any unusual emotion. "At this sight my tears dried,



my lips were silent, and whilst I was absorbed by the struggle taking place within me, she had time to recount all that had passed before I found strength to interrupt her."

Madame Roland further made known to the visitor the nature of the service she was about to claim from her—namely, that she would take charge of certain writings liable to confiscation. Manifestly wounded by a sang-froid corresponding so ill with her own emotional display, and conscious besides of the risk incurred by the possession of compromising manuscripts, Madame Grandchamp nevertheless not only agreed to accept the responsibility, but arranged to pay a daily visit to the prison. She also tendered advice that the captive would have done wisely to follow—begging that she would address letters only to those authorised to receive communications from the prisoners.

Madame Grandchamp was not Madame Roland's only guest. Though ordered to be kept *au secret*, her friendly relations with M. Grandpré, as well as the kindly disposition of her gaoler, enabled her to receive visits from Bosc, Champagneux, her servants, and others. But even more than by their visits she was distracted from the contemplation of present and future ills by the preparation of the *Notices Historiques* upon which she counted for the vindication of herself and the men with whom she had been associated from the charges preferred against them.

The amount of literary work accomplished during her five months' captivity is truly amazing. Memoirs of her childhood and youth, historical papers dealing with the public events which had passed before her eyes, portraits of the leading men of the Revolution, were all written at this period, and have taken their place amongst the classics of French literature. When it is further considered that what remains does not represent the whole of her labours, but that a large portion of

the *Notices Historiques*, written during her first weeks of imprisonment, were destroyed, some conception may be formed of her astonishing energy and literary facility. The practice afforded by her early habits of composition bore fruit ; and, in contrast to her former horror of publication, she was now bent upon securing, by means of it, the favourable verdict of the world at large.

Whilst bearing her confinement with equanimity, and losing no time in utilising the leisure it afforded, Madame Roland had not ceased to protest, pointing out that no charge against her had been specified and that she had undergone no examination. It was, in fact, not until her captivity had lasted close upon a fortnight that Louvet, as police administrator, put her through an *interrogatoire*. The results, published in the *Thermomètre du Jour*, showed that it had dealt mainly with the chief and damning charge made against the entire Girondist party—the scheme attributed to its members for the formation of a republican federation, for separating the departments from Paris and exciting them against the capital. These accusations were indignantly denied by Madame Roland, on her husband's behalf and that of his friends, and there the matter ended for the present.

Her stay at the Abbaye was not to be prolonged. Before she left it one paramount cause of anxiety was removed. She knew that Buzot had effected his escape, and had joined the other Girondist refugees at their rendezvous at Caen. With the certainty of his present safety and of that of Roland, who had reached Rouen, she could afford to be indifferent to matters affecting her personal welfare, and on June 22 she was further cheered by letters from Buzot himself, brought to the Abbaye by a friend of Brissot's, Madame Goussart, who was also ready to serve as a channel of communication in reply.

That same day Madame Roland wrote the first of the short series of letters long afterwards made public—a letter full of all that the fugitive must have craved to learn. It told of her present condition, her surroundings, the treatment she received; it expressed her entire devotion to himself, her rejoicing in the bonds that left her more wholly his. Gently reproaching him for the melancholy of his tone, what, she asked, did a woman's life matter? It was a question of preserving his and of rendering it of use to their common cause. The rest would come after. In every line her indomitable courage is shown, her sole fear being that he might rashly attempt her deliverance. Let him take thought alone for the country. Only in saving it would her salvation be won, nor would she, if she could, purchase safety at its expense. Did she know that he was serving France effectually, she would die happy.

Two days after the letter was written a fresh development of her affairs took place, and her residence at the Abbaye came to an end.



## CHAPTER XXV

Removal from the Abbaye—Release and rearrest—At Sainte-Pélagie—Plans for her escape—Henriette Cannet—Prison life—Waning hopes—Marat's murder—Destruction of the *Notices Historiques*—Her Memoirs—Last letter to Buzot.

MADAME ROLAND had, in some sort, made herself at home at the Abbaye. Her cell might be narrow, its walls dirty, its bars thick ; but she was alone in it, free to shut the door upon herself and to give herself up to thought and memory. Her charm had worked, as it invariably did upon those brought into contact with her, and her gaoler was eager to minister so far as he could to her comfort. Books were supplied to her and Bosc brought flowers, till Lavacquerie, the kindly warder, named her cell "Flora's Pavilion." It was destined, in the course of the following months, to receive many guests. Brissot occupied it next, and before a month had gone by Charlotte Corday was its inmate.

Besides more personal sources of consolation, the prisoner's inveterately sanguine disposition stood her in good stead. She had succeeded in recapturing her hopes for the country ; and, convinced that a widespread uprising of the departments would terminate the despotism of Paris, consoled herself beforehand by the visionary triumph of her friends. If her own fate remained uncertain, she seems to have considered that, should the mob not intervene, her life was safe. How little innocence was to avail in the following months as a protection was a lesson only mastered by degrees.

Meantime she was well aware that the calumnies spread abroad concerning her constituted a present danger. On June 20 the *Père Duchesne*, most shamelessly scurrilous of journals, published an account of a fictitious visit paid to her by a "patriot" who, in the character of a royalist from La Vendée, had obtained from her an admission of the complicity of Roland and others of his party with the rebels. The article ended with the recommendation that she should weep for her crimes before expiating them on the scaffold; and the contents of the paper, shouted under her window by the news-criers with the reiterated and significant information that the culprit was in the Abbaye, was a direct incitement to the listening mob to take her punishment upon themselves. Lodging a complaint with Garat, Minister of the Interior, Madame Roland used no economy of truth. Describing what had passed, she charged him with the responsibility for anything that might ensue. "The ruffian who persecutes, the fanatic who rails, the deceived populace who murder, follow their instinct and their calling. But the man in office who tolerates them, no matter on what pretext, is dishonoured for ever."

Garat was not altogether insensible to the reproach; and, urged to do his duty by Champagneux, he wrote to the Committee of Public Safety on the prisoner's behalf. The reply of the Committee, some ten days later, is an example of the language then in use. It states besides, for the first time, the pretext for Madame Roland's imprisonment.

"Citizen Minister, the arrest of the Citoyenne Roland was based by the Committee of Public Safety on the flight of her husband, who is at this moment kindling the flame of civil war in the department of Rhone-et-Loire, and upon the complicity of this pretended Lucretia with her pretended virtuous husband in the scheme of perverting public spirit by a bureau of the said public spirit. . . ."

By the time the explanation was given, Madame Roland was no longer at the Abbaye, and the cruel trick had been played by which the Commune, releasing her with one hand, instantly recaptured her with the other. Her reiterated remonstrances, tardily supported by Garat, may have shown the desirability of paying a formal deference to the requirements of law, and thereby riveting the victim's chains more securely.

Other reasons made her removal from the Abbaye necessary. As Madame Grandchamp was leaving the prison on June 23, she was stopped by the keeper, who informed her that, Brissot having been sent to the Abbaye with orders that he was to be kept *au secret*, he had sent in a request that Madame Roland should be transferred to another prison, no accommodation for a second solitary captive being available. The news excited Madame Grandchamp to an extent she observes would be incomprehensible to those unacquainted with certain matters personal to herself—no doubt, her connection with Grandpré.

"In Heaven's name," she begged the warder, "keep her ignorant of this. Her entreaties to see Brissot, to speak with him, would cause me the cruellest embarrassment."

It was, in fact, a hard blow to Madame Roland when she learnt, though not till later, that she had actually been under the same roof as the Girondist leader and had yet been unable to confer with him. For the present she remained ignorant of the chance she had missed. The next morning she was informed by two officials, visiting the prison for that purpose, that she was free; the order for her release stating that her examination had elicited nothing justifying her detention. That same day an order was issued for her rearrest "in conformity with the law," and describing her as, "in legal terms," a suspect. Of this she of course knew nothing as,



half wondering not to find herself more moved by the announcement of her enfranchisement, she prepared to leave the Abbaye and to return home.

"You know where M. Roland is at present?" asked one of the officers abruptly before she took leave of them.

She smiled. The question, she observed, was not so discreet as to demand a reply.

Leaving the Abbaye, she drove to the rue de la Harpe, intending to deposit her luggage there before seeking Eudora. Two men, unperceived, had followed her closely, and she had scarcely reached the house when their object was declared.

"On behalf of the law," they said, "we arrest you."

The shock of disappointment was cruel, nor could she at first bring herself to submit. To be thus cheated, tricked, was more than even her gallant spirit could endure without resistance; and, aware that the section in which the house was situated had disapproved of her former arrest, she sent a hurried message to place herself under its protection. It was of no avail. Though the section would have gladly responded to the appeal, it was helpless; the representations made to the Commune were disregarded; and that day she was relegated to her new place of captivity, Sainte-Pélagie.

The prison was of evil repute. Serving in older days as a house of detention for women of bad character, it had won an unenviable notoriety in September as the scene of the massacre of the priests confined there. As she entered it, Madame Roland's heart must have sunk. At first sleep forsook her, replaced by waking dreams, and her health threatened to give way. But it was not long before she rallied her courage. Old habit—the habit of long years of self-control—reasserted itself, together with a sort of shame that her enemies should have had power temporarily to disturb her calm. "Had

I not here, as at the Abbaye, books, leisure? Was I no longer myself?" and the transient agitation of her mind was mastered by the strength of her dauntless will, as she turned to her ordinary occupations, diversifying the monotony of her life by the study of the English language in the works of Shaftesbury and Thomson and by the resumption of her old art of drawing. The composition of her memoirs she had, for a time, laid aside, lest they should fall into hostile hands.

Her surroundings were not such as to facilitate thought or work. In the wing of the building where her cell was situated, many disreputable women were confined, as well as others suffering the penalty of their crimes, and as they congregated by day in the corridors and hall, loitered on the staircases or in the little courtyard below, and shouted through the windows to the men in the opposite wing, the sound of their voices, the very language that was used, reached the ears of the solitary prisoner. The atmosphere impregnated with evil around her seemed to rob life more and more of its value, so that she would not only have been ready to welcome death as a friend, but might now, as later, have been tempted to invite it, had it not been for the thought of her child, for the tenacity with which she clung to the hope of vindicating Roland's reputation should she be called upon to appear in her defence, and—perhaps—because the dream of a future meeting with Buzot still linked her to life.

For hope was alive within her. She was keeping up an imprudent correspondence with M. Lauze Duperret, deputy of the Bouches-du-Loire, who, in spite of his Girondist principles, was as yet unattacked, and was in some sort acting as a channel of communication between her and the refugees. Looking forward to the successful intervention of the departments and the overthrow of the tyranny prevailing in Paris, he added to the news of

what was going on at Caen the assurance that she was unforgotten. "I receive no letter in which you are not mentioned ; they seem more occupied, I assure you, by the harshness you are experiencing than by all they themselves suffer."

The news of his wife's second arrest had reached the unfortunate Roland at Rouen. In safety there, and cared for by old friends, it had thrown him into a fever of anxiety and distress, and he appears to have set on foot a despairing attempt at her rescue by means of Henriette Cannet, now a childless widow, who reappears for a moment in an heroic light, willing to risk her life for the sake of the friend of her youth and the wife of the man she herself had once loved. To M. Breuil, the first editor of the Cannet letters, Henriette described her visit to the prison and its object. "I was a widow and without children. Madame Roland, on the contrary, had a husband, already old, and a charming little daughter. What was more natural than to risk my useless life to save hers, so precious to her family ? I wished to change dresses with her and to remain in the prison whilst she attempted, in this disguise, to leave it. *Eh bien !* all my entreaties, all my tears, availed nothing. 'But they would kill you, my good Henriette,' she repeated again and again ; 'your blood would be upon me. I would rather die a hundred deaths than have to reproach myself with yours.'"

The two accordingly parted, never to meet again. Though it was not likely that Madame Roland would consent to purchase a chance of escape by imperilling her friend, it must have warmed her heart to know that another woman was willing to encounter danger for her, and that the wide divergence of political views—Henriette belonged to a royalist family—had left their old affection unimpaired.

She consistently refused to allow any one to incur



risk for her sake. Madame Bouchard, the porter's wife, had, like others, become attached to her charge, and by her help it was thought possible that an escape might be effected. After consideration Madame Roland decided against making the attempt, afraid in particular that, if successful, it would be damaging to her husband.

"As long as they keep me in prison," she said, "they will leave him in peace. It is more important for the public that he should escape their fury than I. Should reason and justice ever regain their sway, would people not rejoice to find him living and to place him at the helm? Also I will expose no one to danger. I could not enjoy liberty had I compromised others. I will stay here—such is my determination."

She likewise deprecated any rash endeavours to procure her liberation from without, whether meditated by Roland or by Buzot, writing to the latter of the future with a confidence she can hardly have felt. Her emancipation, she said, must result from amendment in public affairs; it was a mere question of waiting; and she comforted him with the assurance that, with the exception of certain moments—probably those they had passed together—she was happier than she had been for six months past. A curious superstition had hitherto caused her to refuse to allow his portrait to be brought to a prison; now, however, it was with her, making up in some feeble way for the absence of the original.

Her fears that the desire to come to her rescue should lead Buzot to run into danger or to take some step prejudicial to the public interest were not uncalled for. In the midst of the schemes he and his comrades were elaborating for the salvation of the country, he was—to quote his biographer—"strangely preoccupied" by Madame Roland's fate; and his restless longing to engage in some enterprise which should include her deliverance was anxiously combated by the

captive, as she dwelt upon the brighter features of a situation it must have been hard for the man to accept in a philosophic spirit. Tracing for his benefit a picture of her prison life, she shows determination to lay stress rather upon its alleviations than its suffering. "The air is better than at the Abbaye, and I seek, when I care to do so, the warder's pleasant chamber. I am indeed obliged to go there to receive the few who can come to visit me. For this, however, it is necessary to pass through a great part of the house, under the eyes of the gaolers and of the wretched women who wander about my part of it. I therefore remain habitually in my cell. It is large enough to hold a chair by my bedside. There, at a little table, I read, I write, and I draw. There, your portrait on my breast or before my eyes, I thank Heaven that I have known you, and have tasted the inexpressible good of loving and being loved with the generosity and tenderness unknown to common souls, and greater than all the pleasures they enjoy. Flowers sent to me from the Jardin des Plantes by Bosc decorate this austere retreat, blossom in it, and scent it with their sweet fragrance."

As July advanced certain indulgences were obtained, mainly through the influence of Madame Grandchamp, aided by the friendly relations the prisoner had again established with those in charge of her. The weather being intensely hot and her sun-baked cell stifling, she was removed from it, to be lodged in a room on the ground floor where a pianoforte had been placed. With sufficient space for comfort, she was thus relieved from the necessity of passing through the crowd of prisoners whenever she left her cell, and the wife of the warder did her utmost to render her position tolerable. "I look upon myself as her boarder," wrote Madame Roland, "and I forget my captivity."

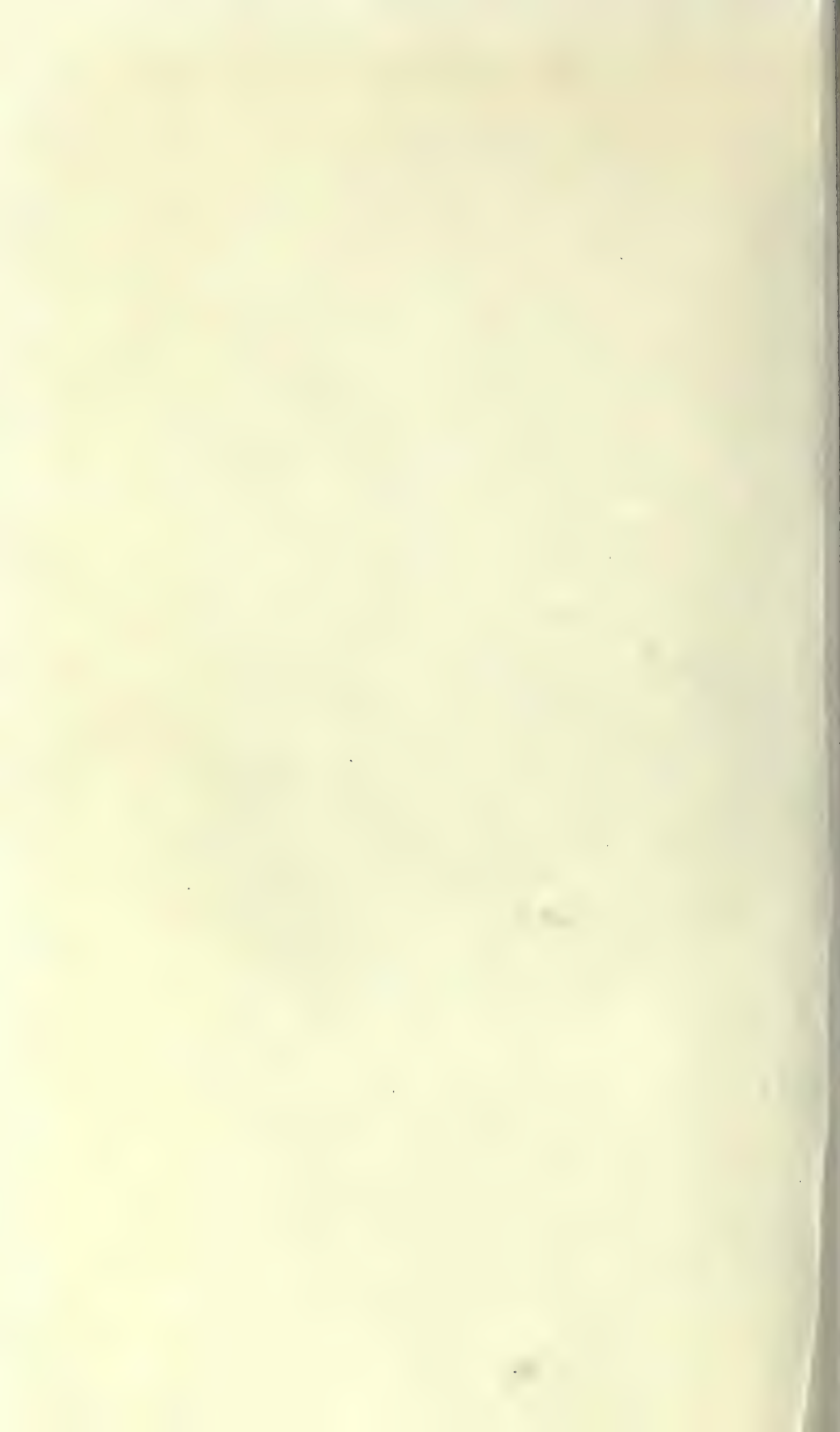
If she could forget her captivity, it was not possible



CHARLOTTE CORDAY.

From an engraving by Greatbatch, after a painting by Marke.





to forget the tragedy enacted outside her prison walls. As the days went by, there was little in the aspect of public affairs to cheer her. Hope might die hard ; but the events of that July must have gone far to kill it. The anticipation that the departments would unite to rise against the tyranny of Paris was falsified. When on July 7 a review of the National Guards took place at Caen, the headquarters of the Girondist fugitives, only seventeen of their number volunteered to march upon the capital. "From that moment the deputies understood that their cause was lost," says M. Hérissay, adding that tradition relates that Charlotte Corday had been present on the occasion, and that the cowardice of her compatriots decided her upon Marat's assassination.

Tidings from other centres of disaffection were no more encouraging. The Girondists conceived suspicions of the good faith of Wimpffen, in command of the insurrectionary forces, such as they were, and when he suggested, as the sole alternative offering a chance of success, that negotiations with England should be set on foot, they felt their distrust justified. They were pledged to the Republic, they told him, and would die for it. By the end of the month they had been formally declared traitors and outlaws ; Caen had given in its submission ; the Council-General of Calvados had retracted its decrees ; and troops from Paris had arrived to re-establish what was called order. Evreux had already vowed fresh fidelity to the Constitution ; the name of Buzot was execrated in the town he had represented, his house was set on fire, his property sold, and he himself fled to Brittany.

Before these things had struck despair into the hearts of those who had hoped that France would shake off the yoke of her present oppressors, Charlotte Corday had dealt her blow and Marat was dead. "An astonishing woman," Madame Roland wrote, "consulting

only her courage, has come to put to death the apostle of murder and plunder ; she deserves the admiration of the universe. But, not well acquainted with the condition of affairs, she chose time and victim ill. There is a greater criminal to whom she should have given the preference. Marat's death has only been of service to his abominable disciples ; they have made him whom they had taken for a prophet into a martyr."

What followed upon Charlotte Corday's act filled the prisoner with indignation. As Champagneux was on his way to visit her, he met the funeral of the popular idol and observed how few were the members of the Convention who had dared to absent themselves from the great demonstration in his honour. When he had described the scene he had witnessed, the two fell at first into a gloomy silence. Madame Roland's own doom seemed certain ; worse, France appeared to be lost. Then she spoke of Brissot, and of the hopes he still indulged, expressing her opinion that he should be told that they were vain. It might, she admitted, seem cruel ; but Brissot, the ardent apostle of liberty, ought not to be stabbed in the back. He had truths to tell, lessons to impart, before he died, and it must be done. Acting on this belief and believing also that the tidings of disaster might be softened if they were conveyed to him by herself, she wrote to him on the subject, with the result that he set to work upon his memoirs. His labours proved vain. The book was printed but was seized and destroyed by Robespierre.

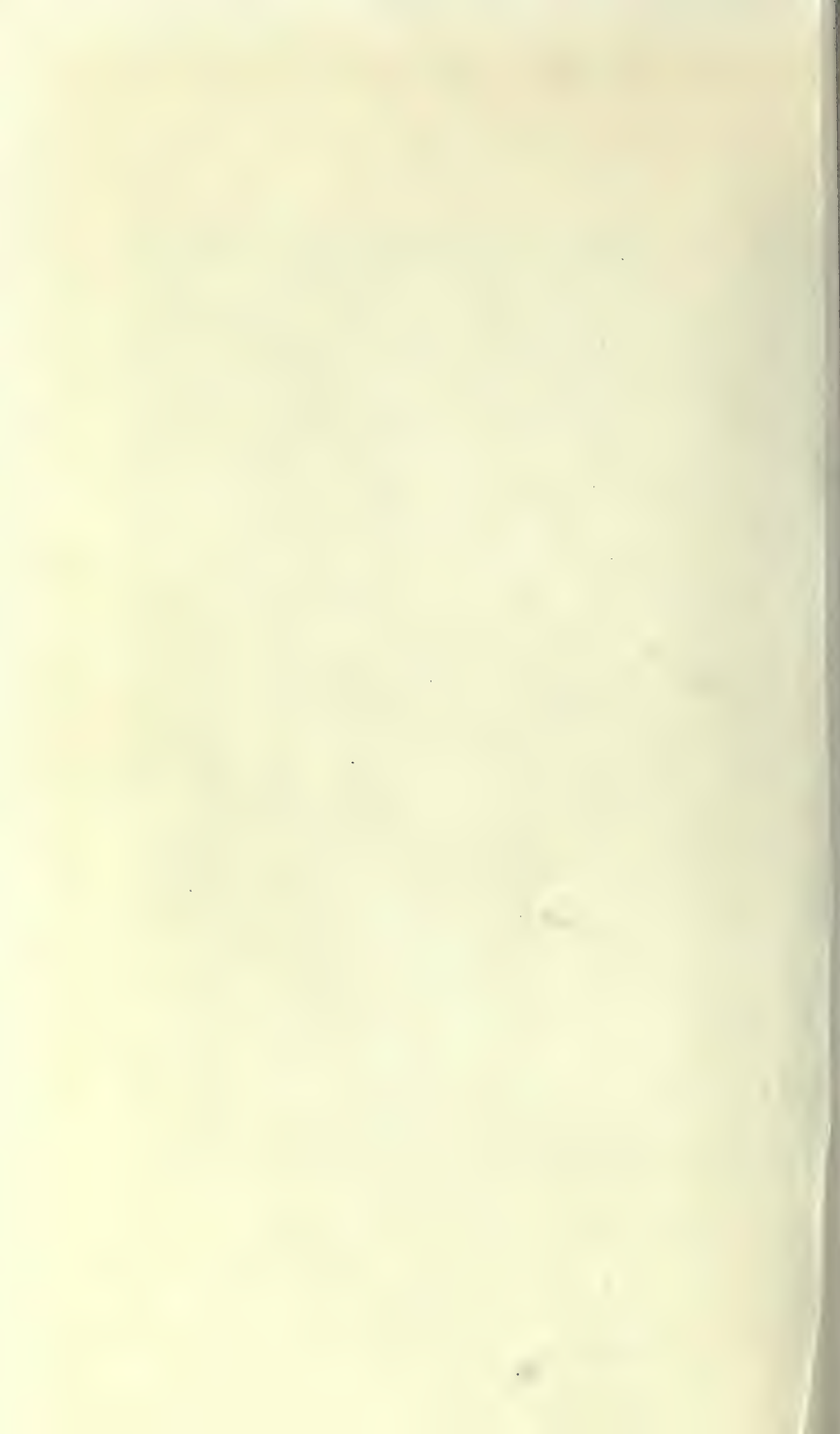
In the prisons, as elsewhere, the growing ferocity of the dominant party was felt. Grandpré, having unguardedly expressed regret at the detention of so many suffering captives, was denounced as guilty of complicity in Marat's death and was put under arrest. Had a letter of Madame Roland's at the moment in his hands for transmission to Brissot been found on him, it might have





THE DEATH OF MARAT.

From a photo by G. Herman, after the picture by David at Brussels.



gone ill with her go-between ; but he was successful in concealing it, and in clearing himself from the charge preferred against him. Caution was necessary for the future, and his visits to Madame Roland became rare. Nor was it long before she was deprived of the comparative comfort secured to her by his influence and the goodwill of the prison officials. A domiciliary visit was paid ; the wife of the keeper was called to order for the indulgence shown to her charge, and Madame Roland was again relegated to the corridor from which she had been removed. Equality, it was observed, must be maintained here as elsewhere. So the melancholy summer wore away.

During the first week in August Madame Roland underwent a painful and personal loss. This was the destruction of the *Notices Historiques*, written during the earlier weeks of her captivity. M. Perroud, in his *Étude Critique*, offers an explanation, in some degree hypothetical, of the calamity. Confided in the first instance to Bosc—what was in Madame Grandchamp's care was no more than a small portion of the whole—the manuscripts had been sent by him to Champagneux, to be copied and returned ; and the earlier part of the work had been thus dealt with when destruction, in a moment of panic, overtook the rest. Champagneux, manifestly anxious to shift the responsibility on to other shoulders, has given his version of the catastrophe—a version considered by M. Perroud, to say the least, inaccurate. Madame Roland's account of the affair may be taken as representing the approximate truth.

"I had confided them all," she says, writing of the *Notices Historiques*, "to a friend who had the greatest value for them. The storm burst upon him suddenly. In view of his impending arrest, he thought of his danger alone, and without reflecting upon other expedients, he threw my manuscript into the fire. I confess I would



rather it had been myself. . . . These writings were a pillow upon which I rested for the justification of my own memory and that of many interesting persons."

The loss proved less complete than she had feared ; but much was undoubtedly gone. It is significant that, in his edition of her writings, Champagneux omitted the passage referring to the incident.

Recognising the impossibility of re-writing the papers that had been burnt, Madame Roland turned at once, with her customary energy, to other literary work, and the *Portraits et Anecdotes*, with the *Mémoires Particuliers* which give an account of her early life, were both begun almost immediately after she had learnt the destruction of the *Notices Historiques*. It was deliberately and of set purpose that she thus turned aside from the present to steep herself in the memories of the past. "My *Notices* are lost," she wrote ; "I am going to write *Mémoires*, and, accommodating myself prudently to my weakness at a time that I have been painfully affected, I shall commune with myself in order to find distraction." In less than three weeks she had completed the history of her childhood up to her thirteenth year, painting the picture of those tranquil and happy days to the accompaniment of the surrounding prison life and finding in the thought of them a refuge from the horrors of her present environment. It would have been well had she been able likewise to shut her ears to what was taking place outside the walls of her place of captivity. There were times when the knowledge of it and the darkening aspect of the future made it hard to carry on the work she had set herself to do. "Involuntary sadness," she wrote on August 27, "penetrates my senses, extinguishes my imagination, and withers my heart." All, wherever she turned her gaze, told of danger, dishonour, and disgrace to the country she loved. Threatened by enemies without and within, the invader was at its gates,

the rebels of La Vendée were a menace to internal peace. Worse than either was the thought that standing at the helm were men who were a shame to the principles she, no less than they, professed ; whilst the patriots she trusted and loved were outcasts, hunted for their lives. The downfall of tyranny, which should have opened an era of justice and peace, had, on the contrary, left passion and vice triumphant. "The hour of indignation is gone by," she wrote in deep dejection ; nothing good could be anticipated, nothing evil a surprise.

In the present condition of Paris the September massacres were in her eyes in a measure eclipsed. They had been the work of few. The people had now acquired a lust for blood and clamoured for greater rapidity in sending victims to the scaffold. For her part, she felt death might come to her at any moment, through the fury of the rabble hounded on by the scurrilities of the *Père Duchesne*. And as for those she loved, what better wish could she form for them than an escape from France which would involve separation from herself ? "O my friends," she wrote, in a passion of grief and longing, "may Heaven be favourable to you and lead you to the shores of the United States, the only refuge of liberty. My prayers go with you, and I have some hopes that you are, in truth, sailing toward those shores. But alas ! for me all is over. I shall see you no more ; and this separation—so greatly to be desired for your safety—I feel to be our ultimate parting."

Three days later, on August 31, she wrote the last letter extant to Buzot. Written, for reasons of safety, in the character of a third person, and couched in veiled language, it was addressed by a woman whose hopes of release were waning to a hunted man, pursued by enemies eager to compass his ruin. In some sort a final leave-taking, it may be well to give it at length :

"You are acquainted, my friend, with your Sophie's



heart and with her affection. You can imagine her emotion, her delight, at receiving tidings of you. Yet how much uncertainty remains! Why not explain more fully your commercial enterprises—so dangerous under present circumstances? The safety of your small property, the success you can look for, are the only blessings she can enjoy in the condition of lassitude to which she is reduced. She only lives to hear of this; your suffering would be death to her. I am charged with her reply, and you cannot fail to understand her need of using the hand of another. I can tell you more of her condition than she would have dared to tell you herself. Her malady, since you departed, has assumed a disastrous character; it is impossible to foresee its duration or calculate its term. At one time violent crises seem as if they would cause great changes, or give rise to fears for ill consequences; at another a painful delay darkens the distant future with anxiety, mingled with some hope. From the moment of her first attack, she made her reckoning with all possibilities, and faced them firmly. The condition of her family and the thought of your prosperity then sustained her. I have seen her, happy in the midst of her sufferings, preserve her serenity, her mental freedom, and enjoy the good fortune she believed to be in store for you, regarding herself as a propitiatory victim of which fate would perhaps accept the sacrifice as the price of benefits secured to those dear to her. How great is the change! Business keeps you far from her, offering no longer a brilliant perspective, but entailing hard labour on you; her old uncle [Roland] is fallen into a terrible state of prostration; he is sinking alarmingly. His life, menaced as it is, may, however, be prolonged; but weak, distrustful, difficult to please, he finds it a torment, and renders it a torment to those who surround him. She has obtained from him the destruction of the will you know of, which had disturbed her



so greatly for your sake"—the memoirs Roland had prepared, dealing with his domestic grievances—"he put an end to it as a final sacrifice, exacted by her with the authority of a dying woman, of which she took advantage. . . . In the strange destiny by which you are so closely united, to be still more cruelly parted, rejoice at least, oh my friend, in the assurance of being loved by the tenderest heart ever created. How many tears have I seen poor Sophie shed, as she kissed your letter and your portrait. Preserve your life for her sake. It is not impossible that, at her age, she may rally from the attacks she bears with so much courage, and as long as she lives you owe yourself to her love." After urging upon him the American scheme—which she also had commended, in vain, to Roland—she took what she may have regarded as a last farewell. "Adieu, man most loved by the most loving woman. With such a heart all is not yet lost. In spite of fortune, it is yours for ever. Adieu. Oh how much you are loved!"

The letter reached the hands of the man for whom it was intended. It is the last of the short series which tell the story of Madame Roland's inner life during the months of her captivity.

## CHAPTER XXVI

Madame Pétion—Her mother's execution—Scenes in the prison—Madame Roland's Memoirs—Ceases writing them—*Mes dernières Pensées*—Suicidal intentions—Trial, condemnation and death of the Twenty-two—Madame Roland receives the news—Interview with Madame Grandchamp.

WHEREVER she might be, whatever might be her personal cares and preoccupations, her private anxieties and sufferings, Madame Roland retained to an uncommon degree the faculty of throwing herself into the life around her, regarding those with whom she was brought into contact with the genuine interest that transforms kindness into sympathy, copper into gold. At Sainte-Pélagie, as afterwards at the Conciergerie, her heart went out to her companions in misfortune, as well as to those charged with her custody. The abuses prevailing in the prison, the mingling of old and young, of criminals with the innocent, shocked and distressed her; intercourse with women like herself victims of the present tyranny, distracted her from her sorrows and roused her indignation on their behalf.

Madame Pétion, the wife of the ex-mayor, was one of this last class. Waiting events at Fécamp, with her little son of ten years old, both mother and child had been arrested and brought to Sainte-Pélagie. What she might more easily have endured for herself, it was difficult to bear for the boy, whose health was suffering from the conditions of prison life; and she begged her mother, living at Chartres, to come to Paris and

plead her cause with those in power. The mother, a Madame Lefèvre, responded to the appeal, and the result was one of those tragedies becoming lamentably frequent. Most unsuited for the part she was called upon to play, she was a woman who, dragged by no will of her own into the whirlpool of revolution, became its victim. Possessing the remains of past beauty, the desire to please had, according to Madame Roland, severe if compassionate, been the principal occupation of her life. The traces of bygone pretensions, with a groundwork of egoism ever apparent, were all that were left to her. Destitute of political opinions, she was incapable of forming them, nor could she argue for two minutes together. Insignificance or triviality were, however, no protection. Imprudent talk, truly or falsely reported, caused her to be denounced as a royalist; she was condemned and executed, the duty of announcing the tidings to her daughter devolving upon Madame Roland.

Incidents of this kind, occurring almost daily, must have thrown a sinister light upon the future prospects of others awaiting their sentence. Yet, notwithstanding the darkening outlook, Madame Roland would throw off at times the oppression of uncertainty and allow her natural gaiety to break through. In marked contrast to the deep melancholy of her letter to Buzot of August 31 is one—it never reached its destination—addressed to M. Montané, once president of the Criminal Tribunal and now a prisoner at La Force.

His wife, a *petite femme du midi*, was confined at Sainte-Pélagie, and the occasion of what Madame Roland termed a *plaisanterie* were the anxious inquiries he had made as to whether the women's quarter was visited by the Duc de Biron, also a captive there. Doubtless addicted, alike as a good judge and as a prisoner, to dreaming—so Madame Roland wrote—he had reflected that misfortune, even more than pleasure, served to bring



people together. But reflection was not good for husbands, and she proceeded to hold up his jealousy to good-natured ridicule, explaining that her *métier* was that of a preacher. "Each has his vocation, rarely to be escaped. Heaven wills that tyrants should be cowardly and cruel, the vulgar crowd blind and stupid, truly honest people contemptuous of life, husbands jealous, women light, and I *prêcheuse*." Let him quiet his imagination. Anxiety was a cure for nothing, a comforting thought—to cool heads. For the rest, the Duke visited the women's quarter daily; but bows were all that passed between him and its inhabitants.

A diversion in prison life was caused at the beginning of September by the arrival at Sainte-Pélagie of the actresses from the Théâtre Français. Anti-patriotic demonstrations during the performance of *Pamela* had roused the suspicions of the authorities; the theatre had been closed, and actors and author placed under arrest. As Madame Roland sat writing on September 4 the arrival of the newcomers was being celebrated by a supper shared by the official who had served as their escort to the prison. "I am writing," she said, "to the sound of laughter in the neighbouring room. The meal is joyous and noisy; the coarse talk is audible; foreign wines sparkle. The place, the accessories, the people, and my occupation form a piquant contrast."

She was to suffer more inconvenience than she anticipated from her neighbours. The warder was no longer able to allow her to pass through the outer hall on the way to his apartment, and she therefore remained confined to her cell; whilst the loud merriment of the comedians, their concerts and banquets, the visits they received and the attentions paid to them, threw her own condition into the greater relief.

The protest of the inmates of the prison at last prevailed and the scenes enacted in the hall were put to

an end. It continued, however, to be used for purposes no less disturbing to the peace of mind of the prisoner confined in her solitary cell ; when the officials charged with the maintenance of what was called order in the house of detention, met there to dine, sharing the feast with other boon companions. "It would be impossible to imagine, and I shall certainly not attempt to describe, the brutal mirth, the coarse conversation, the infamy of these entertainments ; the word 'patriotism' being stupidly applied and emphatically repeated with reference to the scaffold whither all 'suspects' should be sent."

Madame Grandchamp supplies a graphic account—suspected by M. Perroud to be "dramatised"—of one such occasion. She was visiting her friend, when the warder's wife threw a note in at the window, containing the warning that a committee of the Commune was about to meet for dinner in the adjoining hall, and that should it be discovered that their conversation could be overheard from Madame Roland's cell, the prisoner's destruction, with that of her visitor, would be the result. The scene that ensued may be imagined, as the two women, scarcely daring to breathe, listened to what took place at the other side of the door, and heard, as the wine flowed freely, loud talk of massacres, past and future, Madame Roland's name being placed at the head of the list of victims to be drawn from Sainte-Pélagie. It was even proposed to summon her at once before the committee, the suggestion striking terror into the hearts of the eavesdroppers ; but the idea was fortunately abandoned, and at six in the evening the visitors took their departure.

Meantime the weeks were passing, and deliverance was no nearer—rather, the chances of it were receding with every day. The decree against suspects placed every man's life and liberty at the mercy of the despots now forming the Government ; legal procedure was



more and more hurried ; the accused were robbed to a greater and greater extent of their means of defence. The withdrawal of their right of reply was a special blow to Madame Roland. To the opportunity it would have afforded her of vindicating her innocence and that of Roland she had looked eagerly forward ; deprived of this hope, it no longer mattered how or where she was put to death. "As long as one could speak, I felt a vocation for the guillotine," she wrote. "There is now no choice ; and to be murdered here or judged there, is the same to me."

She was carrying on, in spite of interruptions, the preparation of her *Memoirs*, and contemplated making the story of her life complete. Her first eighteen years seemed to her, looking back, the happiest she had known. "No passion was mine ; all was premature, but calm and quiet, like the mornings of the most serene spring days." If adversity had followed, it had developed the strength that had rendered her superior to misfortune. Laborious years ensued, marked by the stern joy belonging to duties fulfilled ; and lastly came the days of revolution, with the maturing of her character and the scope afforded to it. So she wrote, summarising what she had to record in a letter to the friend she addressed by the pseudonym of "Jany"—believed to be the historian Mentelle. She was not destined to carry out her purpose, and it is the earlier part of her life alone of which a detailed and consecutive account was written. On October 4—it was Eudora's twelfth birthday—news was brought of the decree of the previous day, proscribing practically the whole of the Girondist party. "The tyrants," she wrote, "are at bay. They think to fill the chasm open before them by throwing honest men into it ; but they will fall into it afterwards. I do not fear to walk to the scaffold in such good company. There is shame in living in the midst of scoundrels." Though for a little longer she continued



the work she had in hand, there are limits to the power of abstracting the mind from current events : the time came when she no longer felt it possible, and she abandoned the hope of adding to what she had already written the portion she had expected to be the most interesting part of her reminiscences.

“I no longer know how to hold my pen in the midst of the horrors which rend my country. I cannot live upon its ruins ; I would rather be buried beneath them. Nature, open your bosom. . . . Just God, receive me.”

The history of the weeks that remained to her is the history of a death-bed, rendered the more tragic by reason of the strong vitality of the victim and the tenacity of her hold on life. The gradual extinction of hope, the last flickering sparks of her determination to dispute every inch of the ground with the great enemy, her ultimate acceptance of the inevitable—these are the main features of the prolonged agony at which those who loved Madame Roland looked helplessly on.

The decree launched against the Girondists had been the last drop in her cup of bitterness. For the moment courage to meet life, though not to meet death, failed her, and she determined to put an end to an existence that had become intolerable. In a paper called *Mes dernières Pensées* she affirmed her deliberate conviction of the right of the individual to dispose of his own life, and gave her reasons for the step she contemplated. Persons brought to trial being denied an opportunity of vindicating their life and principles, to prolong her existence would be only to supply another opportunity for the exercise of tyranny. Of Roland she craved forgiveness for ending a life she was not permitted to give up to the alleviation of his sorrows. She likewise asked pardon of her child. Yet she could say, at the very portals of the grave, that the example she left her was a rich inheritance. Lastly, she turned to Buzot.

"And you whom I dare not name, you who will be more truly known when, one day, our common misfortunes are commiserated, you whom the most terrible of passions did not prevent from respecting the barriers set up by virtue, will you grieve to see me precede you to those realms where we shall be able to love without a crime, where nothing will prevent our union? There evil prejudices are silent—there are silent arbitrary exclusions, the passion of hate, all kinds of tyranny. I go thither to await you and to find rest. Remain here below, if any refuge is open to uprightness. Remain, a proof of the injustice by which you are proscribed. But should ill-fortune cause you to be tracked by your enemy, do not suffer the hand of a mercenary to be lifted against you. Die, as you have known how to live, free; and by your last act let the noble courage that has been my justification render that justification complete." The expression of her vague hopes of an after-life follow. "Supreme Being, soul of the world, principle of all I feel that is great or good or happy, Thou in Whose existence I believe because it cannot be but that I proceed from something better than what I see, I am about to reunite myself to Thine Essence."

Directions as to her property ensue; with reiterated farewells to those she was leaving—save only to the man she loved above them all. From Buzot, with the illogical confidence of love, she felt no final parting was possible. "Adieu . . ." she wrote; "no, from you alone I part not. To leave this earth is to bring us together."

To Eudora she addressed a letter of leave-taking. If, in spite of the affection bestowed upon her, the child had brought disappointment to her mother, now, in what she believed to be her last hours, she clung to the thought of her with anxious tenderness. A time, she wrote, would come when Eudora would know what it cost her not to give way to emotion as she called her to

mind. The letter to her daughter, with a kindly note to her faithful maid and the manuscript of the *Dernières Pensées*, were all enclosed in another letter to "Jany." When he received the packet, she told him, she would be no longer living. He would find in the papers she sent the reasons dictating her determination to die of hunger. She only waited to learn that sentence had been passed upon the Girondist deputies before putting her project into effect.

Her intention was not carried out. The trial of the Twenty-two lingered. That October was a busy month. On the 12th the examination of Marie Antoinette began. Four days later she was dead. Prisons throughout the country were crowded. Men murmured that the trial of the Girondists was threatening to endure for an eternity. Impatience was common in those days. As she awaited tidings in her prison, Madame Roland's health was failing, and she was lodged in the infirmary and given medical attendance. She herself recognised the symptoms of her disease, and knew it was not one that the doctors could cure.

"As for me, Jany," she wrote, in an undated letter of this month, "all is ended. You know the sickness the English call heart-broken? I am attacked by it beyond cure, nor have I any desire to retard its effects. The fever is beginning to develop. I hope it will not take very long. It is a good."

She was still capable of rousing herself to enter upon an argument with the physician brought to attend her. He was, he observed, the friend of a man whom she did not perhaps love—namely, of Robespierre.

"I knew him well and esteemed him much," she replied. "I believed him to be an ardent and sincere friend of liberty."

"And is he so no longer?" was the answer.

"I fear he also loves power," she returned, "possibly



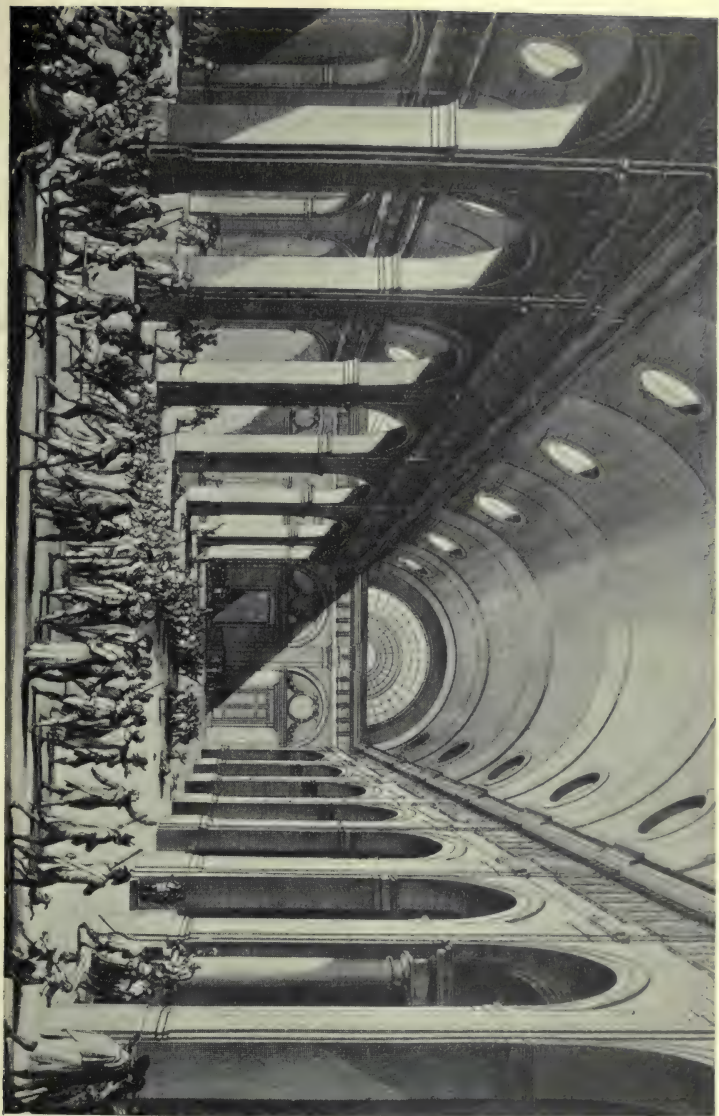
thinking that he knows how to do good, or wishes to do it, more than any one else. I fear he loves vengeance greatly, and to take it upon those by whom he believes he is not admired. I think he is very open to prejudice, easy to excite to anger in consequence, and decides too quickly that those who do not share all his opinions are guilty."

"You have not seen him twice," objected the doctor.

"I have seen him far more often," she replied. "Ask him. Let him put his hand on his conscience, and you will see whether he can say any evil of me."

The conversation is repeated in a letter Madame Roland addressed to the subject of it himself, intending to entrust it to the hands of his friend. She abandoned her design, and the letter was not sent. To what purpose, she reflected, would her protest be made to a man who was sacrificing colleagues of whose innocence he was assured?

Another disappointment was in store for her. Hopes had been raised that she was to be called as a witness in the Girondist trial, and on October 24 she had been taken to the Palais and there held in readiness. Her turn, however, never came, and she was denied the satisfaction of speaking in the presence of her friends. Their enemies were in haste to be done with the Twenty-two and with their unprovable guilt. Vergniaud's oratory was a danger; he had drawn tears. Time was being wasted, and time was valuable. A deputation from the Revolutionary Tribunal represented to the Convention that it was impeded by "forms of law," and suggested that the jury should be authorised to cut discussion short when they felt themselves convinced. The suggestion was accepted and the necessary powers were granted. Freed from legal impediments, progress was rapid. On October 30 the jury felt themselves convinced; the accused were found guilty, and sentence



DEATH OF THE TWENTY-ONE, DEPUTIES OF THE GIRONDE.

Designed and engraved by Duplessis Bernaux.





of death, with confiscation of goods, was pronounced on all the Twenty-two.

One man—Valazé—forestalled the vengeance of his enemies by stabbing himself in court. The rest returned, singing the Marseillaise, to the Conciergerie. The next day the heads of all—including that of the dead Valazé—had fallen on the scaffold.

Throughout the trial Madame Roland had suffered anxiety so great that Madame Grandchamp had thought it well at first, lest she should be moved to attempt suicide, that the course of events should be concealed from her ; but divining the reason of her friend's silence, she begged to be kept informed of all that passed. To hide nothing was, she said, the only way to keep up her courage. Though Madame Grandchamp acted on her wishes, the task laid upon her was a hard one. The sentence having been carried out, and the hopes of a rescue she had entertained over, she dragged herself to the prison to communicate the heavy tidings. She has described what followed.<sup>1</sup> Her face had betrayed her. "She had hardly looked at me before she drew back and sank upon a chair. Her countenance was pale as death ; my tears recalled her to life ; her own flowed and relieved her.

" 'It is for my country,' she said, 'that I shed these tears. My friends have died martyrs to liberty. It is not tokens of weakness their memory demands. My doom is now fixed. Uncertainty is over. I shall shortly join them and show myself worthy to follow them.' "

At Madame Grandchamp's departure that evening

<sup>1</sup> M. Perroud considers that Madame Grandchamp's narrative, written thirteen years later, bears on the whole the mark of veracity. It will be seen, however, that she describes interviews belonging to November 1 and 2 as taking place at Sainte-Pélagie. Madame Roland was transferred to the Conciergerie some time on October 31—the day of the execution of the Twenty-two. Dates or place must therefore have become confused in the narrator's memory.

Madame Roland displayed, for the first time, signs of emotion, begging her to return early next day ; she would then be calmer, and more capable of turning her thoughts to her own affairs. By the morning she had been removed to the Conciergerie, and the conversation Madame Grandchamp records must have taken place some days earlier. Reverting to her former purpose, she had begged to be supplied with a sufficient quantity of opium to enable her to choose her time for departure. Seeing in suicide no breach of the moral law, she argued the point calmly and quietly with her friend.

“Let us consider whether I cannot, ought not, to avoid what appals me,” she said. “It is not death, nor the scaffold, that I fear. It is the sight of that infamous tribunal ; of the people who look on, as if it were a triumph, at the murder of those who loved and wished to serve them.” Was any wrong done to her reputation by avoiding that ordeal ?

Madame Grandchamp, though not at once, decided that, until sentence had actually been passed, she could not reconcile it with her conscience to afford the prisoner the means of escape. Another petition she granted. Would she, Madame Roland asked, have courage to witness the last scene ? As Madame Grandchamp promised, her countenance betrayed the cost at which the pledge was given. For a moment Madame Roland caught the infection of the horror there depicted, and she covered her face with her hands.

“Ah !” she cried, “it is horrible. What I have asked fills me with horror. Promise only to see me pass by. Your presence will lessen my dread of that odious transit.” One friend would at least see how she bore that ultimate trial, and she added the promise that her manner of meeting it should render Madame Grandchamp content.

Again Madame Grandchamp gave the required

pledge. The rendezvous was to be at the end of the Pont Neuf, where she was to lean against the parapet.

To Bosc Madame Roland had made in writing the same request she had vainly proffered to Madame Grandchamp, meeting with a like refusal of the means of evasion she craved. "In the most painful letter he had ever written" her old and true comrade and brother-in-arms explained his inability to supply her want. Her unresentful reply is extant. His affection, she told him, had done her good. But he misunderstood her. Her desire had not been to die at once, only to secure the means of choosing her time to do so. "I wished to do homage to the truth; then to go hence before the final ceremony." It was not weakness that had inspired the desire. And yet she truthfully admitted that anger and bitterness, and the belief that the fugitive Girondists had been captured, might have secretly contributed to a determination for which the mind had found good motives. Begging Bosc to reconsider his refusal, she nevertheless expressed her readiness to submit to his deliberate judgment.



## CHAPTER XXVII

The Conciergerie—Comte Beugnot—Riouffe—Madame Roland's examination—Condemned to death—The last scene.

THE Conciergerie when Madame Roland entered it contained a strange medley of inmates. Aristocrats, republicans, thieves, women from the street, were to be found in indiscriminate proximity. Amongst women, Madame Du Barry represented the past, Madame Roland the present, Josephine Beauharnais the future. Philippe Egalité was there awaiting his sentence. Amongst the great names of France was that of the Duchesse de Grammont. Comte Beugnot was likewise a prisoner ; and, regarding the newcomer with a scrutiny at first curious and quickly becoming sympathetic, has left upon record the impression she produced upon a stranger in no way prepossessed in her favour.

In the days of her prosperity, when a large part of Paris was at her feet, Beugnot had refused an introduction to the wife of the minister. Of the women who had won notoriety in the course of the Revolution he had respected none, and he attributed the praises he had heard of her to party spirit. As the two now met, involved in a common misfortune, he confessed that he had been mistaken. Though devoid of regular beauty, something noble and *insinuant* in her countenance at once attracted him. When he had had an opportunity of hearing her converse, he was able to affirm that he had never heard any woman speak with more grace and purity.

"Daily," he wrote, "I felt a fresh charm in listening to her, less by reason of what she said than because of the magic of her utterance." Yet he was not too much blinded by admiration to be incapable of criticism. She was, he thought, more carried away by her head than she would have been by her heart; her opinions were held with the violence of a passion; she loved those who shared them, hated those who did not. Therefore, in the estimation of the count, who no doubt belonged to the latter class, she was absolutely unjust, and had inspired all her party with a heat of prejudice not a little contributing to the alienation of other minds. Her vanity, too, was always and undisguisedly apparent. "She robbed others of the pleasure of extolling her by doing it herself."

The severity of the animadversions, the impartiality of the judge, serve to enhance the power of the attraction by which, in spite of blemishes noted and condemned, he felt himself subjugated. "Surprised by the beauty and the elevation of her language, I could not connect her with the woman who had frequented the Jacobins and was soiled with the mud of the fraternal societies."

With death close at hand, she had not lost her readiness to talk, sometimes on one subject, sometimes upon another. Beugnot, out of sympathy with her opinions however much in sympathy with herself, admired her most when, turning from politics, she would speak of those domestic duties in the fulfilment of which she held that a woman's supreme happiness lay; or when speaking of her husband and child, her eyes would fill with tears.

Riouffe, a Girondist fellow-prisoner, who has also written of these days, took a different view. To him the language of a republican on the lips of a woman for whom the scaffold was being prepared was one of the still unfamiliar miracles of the Revolution. "We all listened to her in admiration and amazement. She ex-

pressed herself with a purity, a rhythm, and a prosody rendering her words a sort of music of which the ear never wearied."

Amongst the lower inmates of the crowded prison her influence, during the few days she spent at the Conciergerie, made itself felt. The room she inhabited became, said Beugnot, a refuge of peace in that hell. If she entered the courtyard where the wretched women who shared her captivity herded together and quarrelled or fought, her presence was sufficient to restore order. Recognising no other authority, they would control themselves rather than cause her annoyance. Surrounded by these outcasts of society, giving alms, counsel, and, where it was possible, comfort, she won from them honour and respect. Du Barry they treated as an equal.

Clavière, once her husband's colleague in the Ministry, was confined in the Conciergerie, and the two often talked together—talked of "*nos amis*," as Madame Roland termed the Twenty-two whose blood was wet, and to whose errors, in spite of her affection, she was not blind. Their measures, she considered, had lacked strength.

Such she was, a calm, gracious presence, in the eyes of those around her, in these last days, her face bearing the impress of melancholy stamped upon it by the five months' captivity nearing its end; no hope of life or freedom modifying her language or restraining the profession of the creed in which she was to die.

Yet there is another side to the picture—a more pathetic, perhaps a more human, one.

"Before you she gathers up all her strength," Riouffe was told by the woman who attended on her; "but in her own room she will sometimes remain for three hours leaning against the window and weeping." Alone, she was perhaps least solitary. At such times her thoughts were at liberty to wander away to those she loved—to



little Eudora, soon to be left a motherless waif; to Roland, in hiding, desolate and miserable, whom she did not expect to survive her, and who was to verify her forecast by putting an end to himself at the tidings of her execution; to Bosc, the true friend of prosperity and adversity alike; and to the many who had loved her and from whom she was to part with no farewell taken. Above all, she will have been in spirit with Buzot, a hunted man whom her death would rob of all that gave life its chief value. "*She* is no more," he afterwards wrote, giving vent to his passionate grief in a letter to Le Tellier—"she is no more; the wretches have murdered her. Judge if anything remains upon earth for me to regret." What wonder if at times, when the noise and tumult of the prison-house were somewhat stilled, she would appear, buried in deep thought, to have escaped from her surroundings and to have withdrawn into a region whither her companions could not follow her.

No time was to be lost in disposing of her case. On November 1, the day after her transference to the Conciergerie, she underwent, at the office of the Revolutionary Tribunal, a preliminary examination conducted by David, the judge, Lescot Fleuriot, representing the public prosecutor, and a clerk, Derbey, no one else apparently being present. It lasted three hours, the object being to obtain admissions from the prisoner which should justify a sentence already determined upon.

"There was a long hard argument," she wrote, "before I could have my answers recorded. They wanted me to reply yes or no, accused me of loquacity, said we were not there to be clever. . . . When the judge asked a question not to the taste of the public prosecutor, he put it into other words, lengthened it, made it complex or insidious, interrupted my answers, forced me to curtail them. . . . The intention to ruin me seems plain. I will not preserve my days by baseness, but neither will

I afford an opportunity to malice, or facilitate by folly the labours of the public prosecutor. . . .”

The official account of the affair corroborates her statements, and exhibits the spirit animating the examination. The inquiries put to her were clearly framed with the object of proving that she, with others of her party, had attempted to destroy the unity of the Republic and to place the departments in opposition to Paris. The letters found upon Lauze Duperret were produced as evidence that he had served as a channel of communication between the prisoner and the fugitive and attainted Girondists.

By the questions addressed to her in the character of a political agitator Madame Roland was unmoved, simply disclaiming responsibility for what, as a woman, concerned her merely as an outsider. To the inquiry whether she had not maintained intercourse with Barbaroux and other traitors, she replied boldly that since the men in question had left Paris as her friends and she did not regard them as traitors, she had desired to have tidings of them, and had not had it. Other interrogations did not leave her equally calm. Riouffe, watching her go to the Tribunal, noticed that her habitual assurance was undisturbed. On her return her eyes were wet, and she confessed that questions had been asked causing her to shed tears. She referred to inquiries, doubtless intended as a gratuitous insult, as to whether, amongst the Girondists, there had not been men with whom her relations were more intimate and private than with others.

“To which she replied”—to quote the official record—“that from the time of the Constituent Assembly she and Roland had been intimate with Brissot, Pétion, and Buzot. Asked repeatedly whether, apart from Roland, her husband, she had not had private relations with any of those named, she replied that she, together with Roland, had been acquainted with them; and, knowing



them, had entertained for each the degree of esteem and attachment he seemed to her to merit."

The evasion is palpable. It is curious that whilst no less than ten persons appear to have been cognisant of the truth as to her relations with Buzot, not one of them, either through unfaith or indiscretion, allowed it to become known, nor was it till some seventy years later that the facts became public. At this time it was young Barbaroux who was generally credited with being her lover—a misconception she herself furthered during her examination; since, asked to name those of the fugitives who were more particularly her friends and the friends of Duperret, she named him. The young Marseillais, as M. Perroud points out, was already as deeply compromised as it was possible to be, and her avowal could do him no harm. Buzot's name was best left out.

This incident took place on November 3, when, her examination having been resumed, the correspondence with Lauze Duperret was again made a subject of minute investigation. Furthermore, Roland was charged with sowing dissension between the departments and Paris during his term of office, and it was asserted that, with that object, he had established a Bureau of Public Spirit of which she had been directress; her categorical denial of both statements being characterised as an outrage on truth. The interview ended with a passage of arms, in which her old spirit flashed out. When, she was asked, had her husband left Paris? and did she know where he was?

She might well have smiled at the question. Was it likely that she would point out to his enemies the refuge where Roland had found shelter? In this instance she used no evasion in declining to reply. Whether she knew where he was or not, she answered, she neither ought, nor would, say—the reply being qualified as open



rebellion against the law. Truth was due to justice, she was told ; and though she had again manifested her intention of concealing it, it would pierce through lies, however well disguised.

With a final defence of her husband and with her choice of M. Chauveau as her counsel, the examination closed.

On November 7 the depositions of Mademoiselle Mignot, Eudora's governess, and the Rolands' servants, Louis Lecoq and Cathérine Fleury, were taken. From the two last, faithful to their mistress, nothing incriminating could be elicited. Mignot, on the other hand, in whom Madame Roland had placed the fullest confidence and for whose future she had even now been caring, did her utmost to assist the prosecution. Such testimony, true or false, was of small importance. Madame Roland was to die. Had her innocence been as clear as daylight it would not have availed to save her. Her loathing of the men in power and of their methods of government was known to all ; it mattered little of what specific offence she was accused. Fouquier-Tinville based his attack upon the letters found in Duperret's possession. Her real crime was that she was a Girondist and shared the views of her party. A conspiracy against the Republic was alleged to have been formed ; its leaders had held at her house secret meetings of which she had been the animating spirit. She had received in prison letters from Barbaroux and the other fugitives, answering them in a sense favourable to the conspiracy. Her letters to Duperret himself had been expressed in a like sense. These were, in brief, the charges against her.

On November 8 judgment was to be pronounced. The preceding day her last letter was written. It was addressed to a Madame Godefroid, to whose care Eudora had been confided, the friends who had first given her shelter having been forced, in consideration of the

risk involved, to place her elsewhere. Madame Godefroid, who kept a pension, had consented, on condition that the child's name was changed, to receive her ; but the knowledge that she was thus thrown on the world was a blow to her mother. "Ce cœur si ferme se troubla tout à coup," wrote Barrière, inspired by Bosc.

"You owe to misfortune and to the confidence felt in you a trust very dear to me," she wrote to Madame Godefroid. ". . . Courage makes it easy to bear our own ills, but the heart of a mother is difficult to quiet with regard to the fate of a child from whom she is torn. If calamity has a sacredness of its own, may it preserve my dear Eudora, I will not say from troubles like mine but from perils infinitely more formidable in my eyes. May she keep her innocence, and one day fulfil, in peace and obscurity, the duties of wife and mother. . . ." A few simple directions followed, and the letter, signed "Eudora's mother," ended.

That same evening she had an interview with Chauveau, the lawyer she had chosen to conduct her defence, and the matter was discussed between them. She had changed her mind and had decided against permitting him to incur the odium attaching to the office ; she would be no man's ruin. The ring she gave him at parting was a farewell gift. His advocacy, she told him, could be of no service to her ; her doom was decided ; to defend her might be fatal to him. Forbidding him to appear in court, she warned him that, should he disregard the injunction, she would disavow him. And so the two parted.<sup>1</sup>

The next day was a Friday. As she was waiting that morning to be summoned before the Tribunal,

<sup>1</sup> This incident is related in Miss Tarbell's biography of Madame Roland. I have not found it mentioned elsewhere, but it may be one of the traditions communicated to her by the members of the family with whom she was acquainted.

Beugnot and Riouffe were present. Both have left upon record their impressions of the scene. In anticipation of her death sentence, she had put on what Madame Grandchamp had heard her call her *toilette de mort*. Her dress was white, confined at her waist with a black girdle. Her long black hair fell loose; a lawn handkerchief covered her head. Her colour was bright, and she was smiling. One hand held up her gown, the other was abandoned to the women who crowded around her to kiss it. Some of them were sobbing. "Rien ne peut rendre ce tableau," said Beugnot; "il faut l'avoir vu."

To all she gave kind words, counsels of courage, hope, and peace. Though she did not say she was going to her death, it was noticed that she made no promise to return. Presently an aged gaoler—one who had filled his thankless office for thirty years—appeared to open the gate that she might pass through.

Following her to the passage, Beugnot gave her a message Clavière had asked him to deliver. She had replied to it, and was still speaking when the summons came for her to start on her way to the Tribunal, and breaking off in what she was saying, she prepared to obey.

"Adieu, monsieur," she said, as she gave Beugnot her hand; then, remembering no doubt past discussions, "let us make peace—it is time. *Du courage*," she added as she saw his struggle to restrain his tears.

One Guyot, a lawyer appointed by the Tribunal, undertook the defence. It was in her eyes a matter of small importance. She was, as she had told Chauveau, foredoomed. When Guyot had finished what he had to say she spoke, openly avowing the men who were her friends, and was proceeding to give a summary of her political past when she was interrupted and forbidden to continue a speech "breathing federalism throughout." Turning to the audience, she made a vain appeal, an-



swered only by cries of "Vive la République! A bas les traitres!" And two questions were put, without further delay, to the jury: Had the conspiracy against the Republic existed? Had the accused been one of its originators or accomplices? To both an answer in the affirmative was given, and the death-sentence was pronounced, by virtue of the law passed the previous December decreeing that whosoever should attempt or propose to break the unity of the Republic or of its government, or to detach any portion of it in order to unite it to foreign territory, should suffer the capital penalty.

It is affirmed by a contemporary, Des Essarts, that the prisoner then spoke, and that her words were a defiance.

"You judge me worthy," she said, "to share the fate of the great men you have assassinated. I shall endeavour to carry to the scaffold the courage they displayed."

No time was to be lost. The execution was to take place that day at half-past three. The commander-in-chief was ordered to send troops to assist at it, his directions explaining that the wife of an ex-minister was to suffer, and the public interests demanded that there should be no delay. The paper bore on it the words "Très pressé."

It may be that the captive was likewise in haste. As she re-entered the prison, Riouffe noted that the swiftness of her movements seemed to betoken something of joy.

That day, dining with Lamarche, a criminal condemned, as a fabricator of false notes, to suffer with her, she strove to induce him to eat, and, trying to inspire him with courage, showed a gaiety so gentle and so sincere that more than once he was moved to laughter. Of her own feelings it is not recorded that, at this last hour, she spoke. And thus the moment of departure drew near.

All Paris was on the alert. It had grown used to death-spectacles. To those who asked for bread, as Vergniaud once said, corpses were now given—in abundance. But the present victim did not belong to the rank and file of those sent to the scaffold, and the streets were crowded with men and women eager to gaze upon one whose name was familiar to all. Amongst the throng of sightseers, malevolent or indifferent or curious, were men and women who loved her. Bosc, in hiding in the neighbourhood, only reached Paris that evening, unable to await tidings at a distance. But Mentelle—the “Jany” of her letters—was there, and Madame Grandchamp had summoned up her courage and was carrying out the promise she had given to the prisoner. Forcing her way through the throng, she had taken up her place by the parapet of the Pont Neuf, the spot agreed upon for the mournful tryst, and there awaited the funeral procession.

The one ordeal the victim had dreaded, the one test she would, if possible, have escaped, was at hand. To face the people she had loved and idealised, who hated and reviled her as a traitor to their cause and to the country—from this even her brave spirit had shrunk. But she had, for once, underrated her strength.

As Madame Grandchamp kept her post on the Pont Neuf a cry from the crowd warned her that the moment of meeting was at hand. “She is here!—she is here!” the shout went up. Another few minutes, and the central figure of the show had appeared. Calm and smiling, Madame Roland was still striving to impart courage to her unhappy companion. Then, as the appointed spot was reached, her eyes sought and found the familiar face of her friend; a smile lit her own; the cart moved on, and their parting was over.

There is little more to be told. Round the deaths

of men and women of moment to the world traditions, true or false, are apt to gather. Upon most of those belonging to this final scene of Madame Roland's life the stamp of truth would seem to be set. They are in character with the woman as we know her.

Her last journey was ended. She had passed the spot where her serene and tranquil girlhood had been spent ; followed by the mob, now greeting her with fierce shouts, now falling into silence, she had traversed the familiar streets. As the cry "A la guillotine !" was raised, it is said that she turned upon the crowd.

"I go there," she answered ; "soon I shall have reached it ; but those who send me thither will not be long before they follow me. I go to the scaffold innocent ; they will come there as criminals ; and you who applaud to-day will then applaud."

Arrived at the place of execution, she proffered a singular request. Incredible in the case of another woman and unsupported by evidence, it is yet too much in character to be rejected on the score of improbability. It was that paper and pen might be given her, so that she might set down the strange thoughts that had arisen within her. The request, if made, was refused.

One ultimate act of mercy remained for her to perform. It was her right, according to the customs of that place of slaughter, to suffer before her companion ; but she begged that Lamarche should be spared the spectacle of her execution. The executioner demurred.

"Will you refuse a woman her last request ?" she asked him ; and the man gave way.

She had not long to wait. Bound to the plank, her eyes—so they say—turned to the statue of Liberty erected in memory of August 10.

"O Liberty," she said—words which have echoed through the world—"O Liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name !"



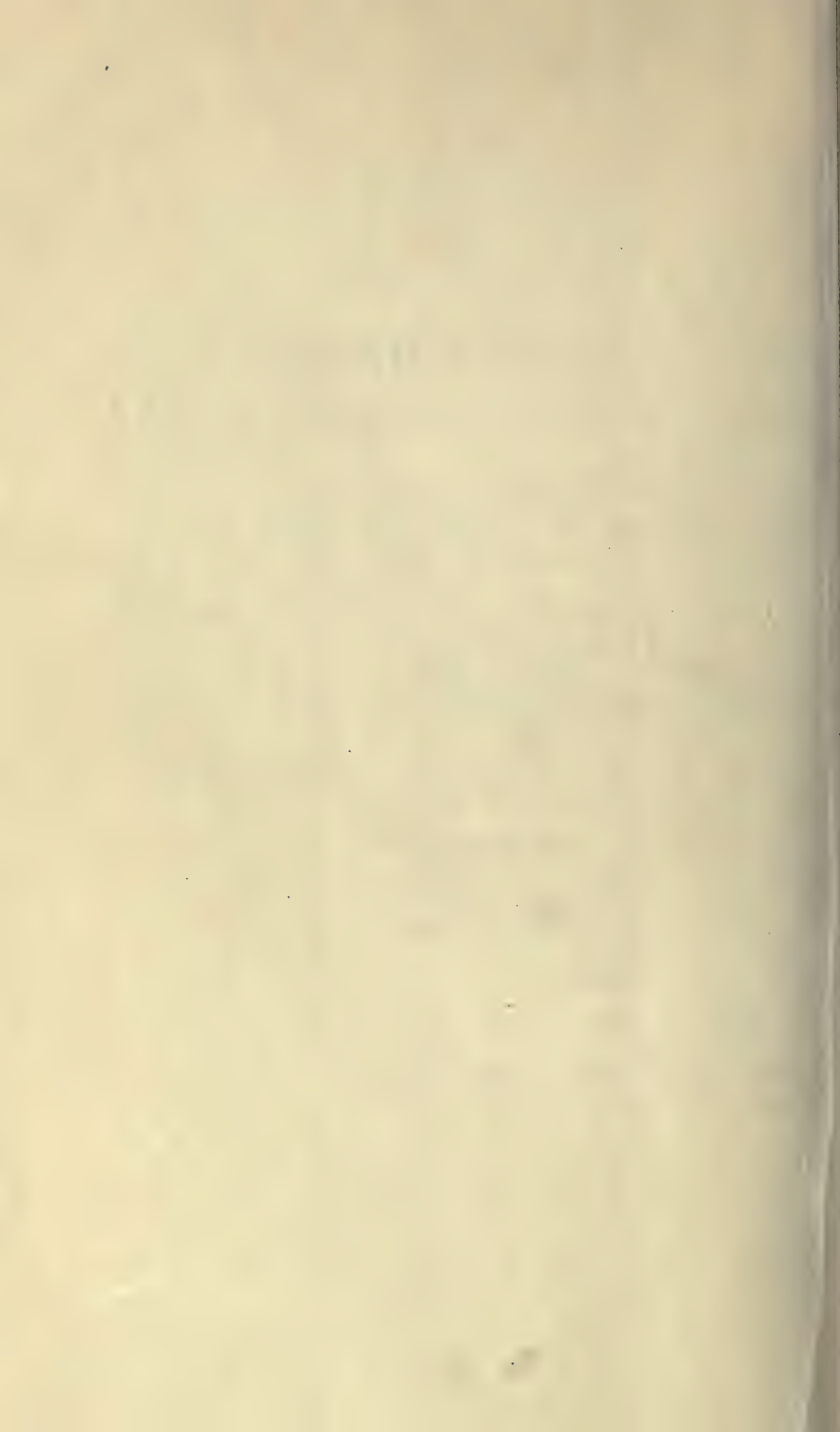
Then the axe did its work and all was over.

Marie Jeanne Roland, in dedicating herself to the Revolution, had done it with her eyes open. "Fate, in causing us to be born at the epoch of the birth of liberty," she had written to Bancal des Issarts, "has made us the *enfants perdus* of the army which is to fight and to triumph for her. It is for us to perform our task well, and thus to prepare the happiness of generations to come."

The work, so far as she was concerned, had been done; nor was she the woman to grudge the cost. To the end she remained faithful to the creed of liberty. Defaced with crime, stained with blood as it had been by those who claimed the name of its disciples, she never charged their sins upon the faith they professed or shrank from proclaiming herself its devotee. She died as she had lived, fighting in the ranks of the revolutionary army.

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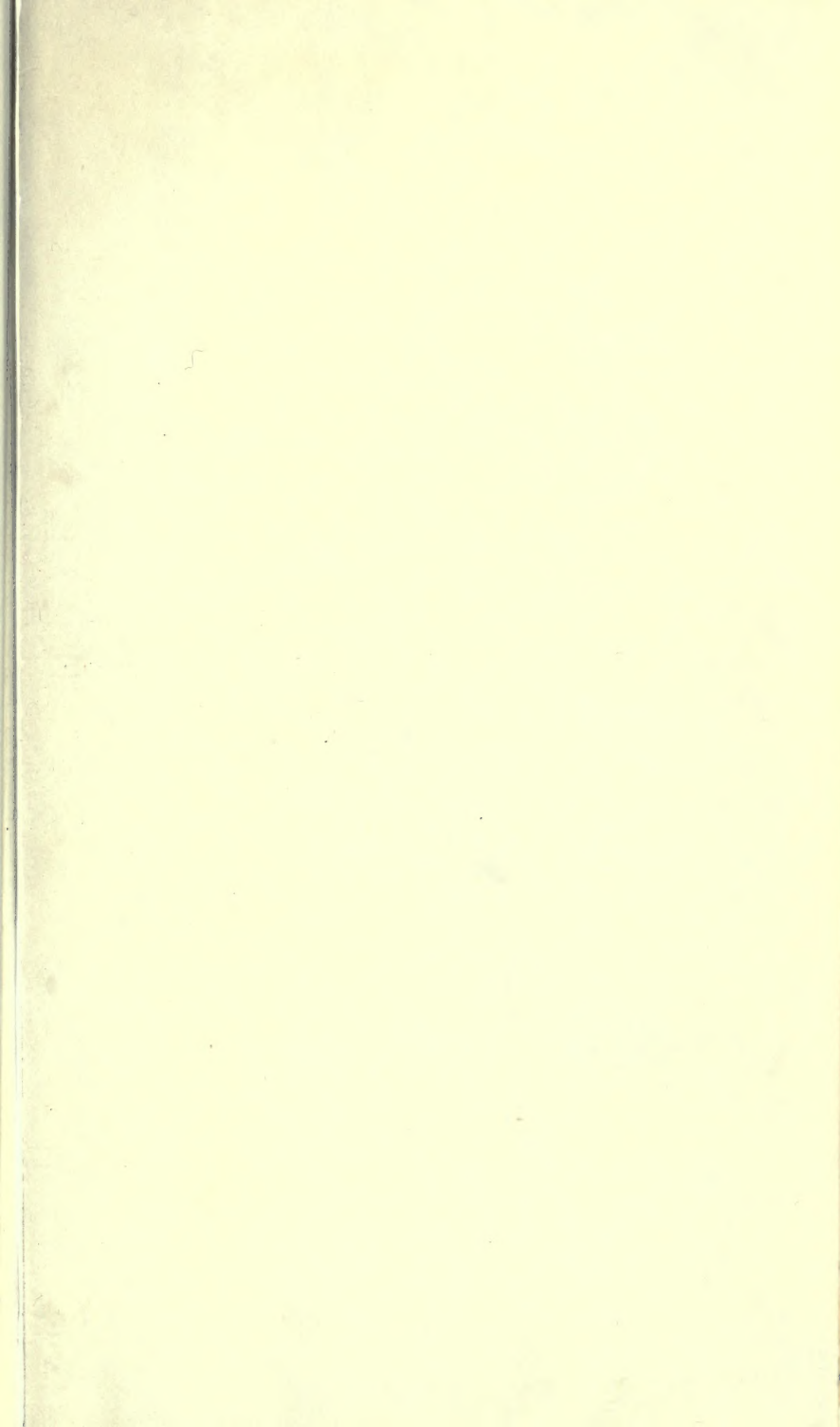
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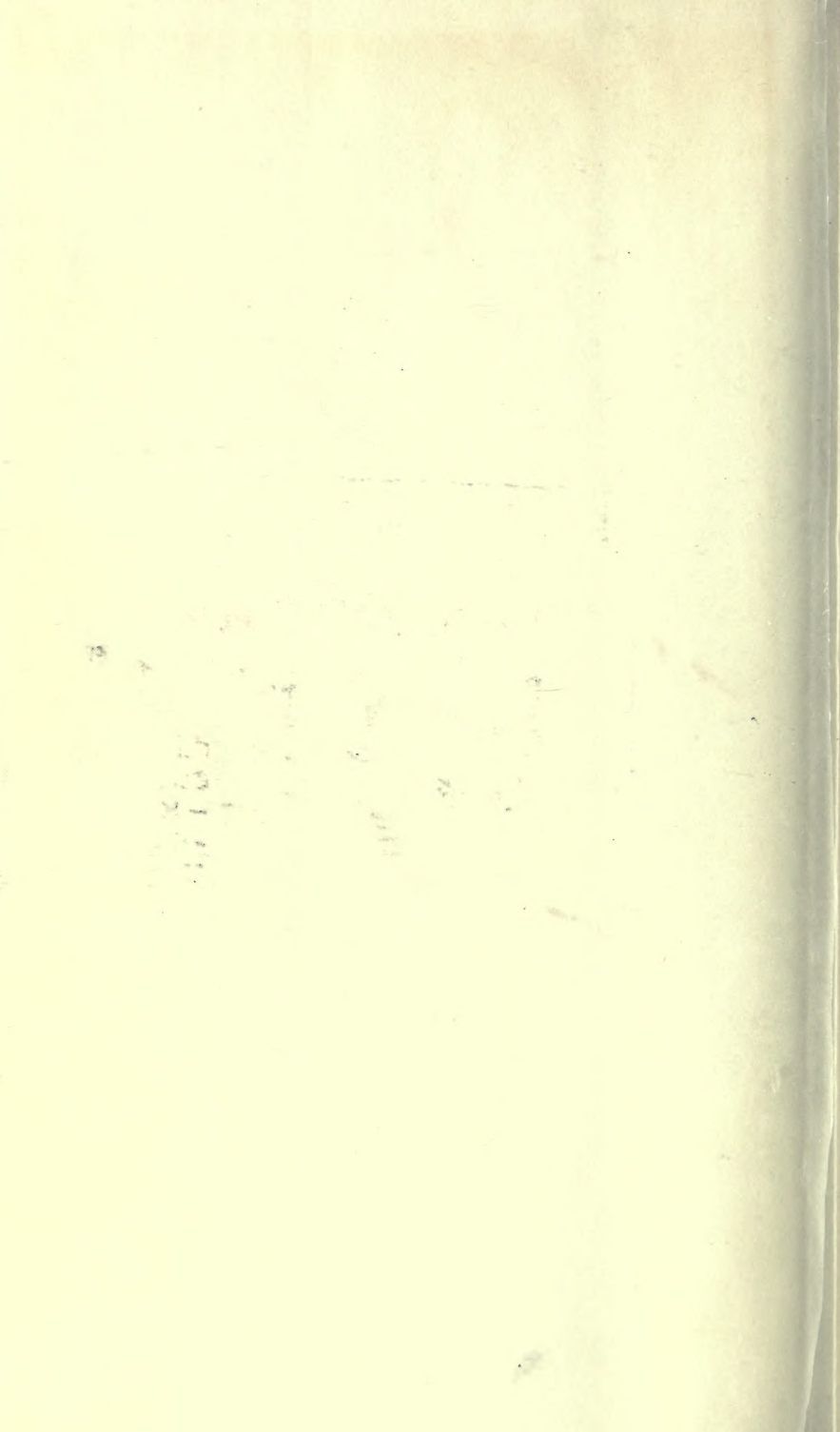












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